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HISTORY

OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

IN THE

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

By ABEL STEVENS, LL.D.

AUTHOR OF

"THE HISTORY OF THE RELIGIOUS MOVEMENT OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY CALLED METHODISM," ETC.

VOLUME I

THE PLANTING OF AMERICAN METHODISM

NEW YORK: EATON & MAINS
CINCINNATI: CURTS & JENNINGS

DEDICATORY PREFACE.

To Gabriel P. Disosway, Esq.

My Dear Sir,—In submitting to you the first two volumes of the "History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America," I acknowledge, with grateful pleasure, my obligations to you for the counsels and encouragements you have constantly given me in my laborious task. During more than a quarter of a century the extraordinary "Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, called Methodism," has been to me a profoundly interesting study. But such are the paucity, the carelessness even, and consequent inaccuracy of our early documents, that my task has had extreme embarrassments. So formidable have these been that, could they have been estimated in the outset, they would have deterred me from my undertaking. No man has given me more intimate sympathy or more valuable advice in my researches than yourself. Your ancestral connection with the early Huguenotic religious history of the country, and a Methodistic parentage which has rendered you familiar with nearly the entire history of American Methodism, have enabled you to afford me indispensable aid, and have enabled me, as difficulty after difficulty has vanished, to rejoice in the labors of my pen.

My public function, as a Church editor, afforded me, for years, means of gathering fragmentary accounts of our history, as they occasionally appeared in my periodical "exchanges." They accumulated in large collections. An early correspondence with many of the fathers of the denomination, most of whom have now gone to their rest, procured autobiographical sketches, local historical records, and other invaluable manuscripts, which remain with me as precious relics. I found, in these materials, many data which, though unsuitable for a general history of the denomination, were too important to be lost, and might be properly enough used in a local narrative. More than fifteen years

since, a portion of them were, therefore, published in a volume of "Memorials of the Introduction of Methodism into the Eastern States, comprising Biographical Notices of its Early Preachers, Sketches of its first Churches, and Reminiscences of its Early Struggles and Successes." The unexpected interest excited by this publication led to a second series, some twelve years since, entitled, "Memorials of the Early Progress of Methodism in the Eastern States," etc. As many, if not, indeed, most of the early preachers of Methodism in New England, were from the Middle States, and, by the transitions of the "itinerant system," were tossed, not only back again to their original fields, but, many of them, to remote parts of the country, their personal history, as given in these early volumes, presented not a few data of the general history of the denomination. Historical students know that no literary labor is more onerous than the preparation of works like these. The private correspondence, the collection and combination of fugitive and fragmentary accounts, the collation of documents, the harmonization of conflicting statements, the grouping of events lacking often their most essential connecting links, the portraiture of characters, historically important but almost totally obscured in undeserved oblivion, present embarrassments which may well constrain the writer often to throw down his pen in despair. But I have been abundantly compensated by the facts that the "Memorials" have become recognized as indispensable authorities, for reference, in subsequent historical works on Methodism, that they are incessantly cited in accounts of eastern Churches and Conferences, and that they have rescued, at the last moment, many heroic characters from utter oblivion. I have even had the presumption to suppose that, as no general ecclesiastical historian can now ignore the primitive Church chroniclers, Eusebius, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, Evagrius, feeble and blundering narrators as they were, so these humble contributions of my pen shall, by the mere fact of their chronological precedence, be necessary documents of reference for the abler writers of the future. They have been followed by one effect for which I have especially to congratulate myself: they were the first in that numerous series of local narratives of the denomination which have since enriched us with our best historical materials. "Memorials of Methodism in New Jersey," by Atkinson; "Annals of Southern Methodism," by Deems; "Sketches of Western Methodism," and several similar works by Finley; "Methodism within the Troy Conference," by Parks; "Early Methodism within the bounds of the Old Genesee Conference," by

Peck; "Sketches and Collections," by Carroll; "Lost Chapters," and the "Heroes," by Wakeley; the "Heroines," by Coles; "Methodism in Canada," by Playter; "Methodism in America," by Lednum, "German Methodist Preachers," by Miller, and many similar and equally valuable works, besides almost innumerable biographical contributions to our history, have, since, been incessantly issuing from the press, and it seems probable that few recoverable documents or reminiscences, of our early times, will now be allowed to perish. If there has been somewhat of antiquarian extravagance in this prevalent and infectious spirit of inquiry; if it has sometimes harassed our public press with belabored controversies about names and dates, it is nevertheless pardonable, and indeed admirable, for the rich results it has afforded. The researches of Wakeley have especially given us facts of priceless value, and I cannot too strongly acknowledge my obligations to him. The occasional publications of Drs. Coggeshall, Hamilton, and Roberts deserve equal commendation. These writers, though differing on important questions, have illuminated phases of our history which formerly seemed hopelessly obscured.

The two volumes of "Memorials" were but preliminary to a more elaborate work, "The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, called Methodism, considered in its Different Denominational Forms, and its Relations to British and American Protestantism," in three volumes. I know of no work on Methodism which proposed so comprehensive a scope; many of its necessary routes of research had never, to my knowledge, been explored; but if at any time I was bewildered, and disposed despondently to retreat from the labyrinth of incoherent data and conflicting authorities, as well as from other and more vexatious discouragements, with which our mutual confidence has made you familiar, your genial voice has never failed to summon me forward with renewed determination.

Early in the prosecution of these works I became convinced of two facts: first, that if successfully completed they might be more useful than any other possible service of my life to the Church; but secondly, that they could not be successfully prosecuted without comparative retirement from most other public labors, for, at least, some years. During nearly a quarter of a century my official position in the Church had kept me reluctantly engrossed in exhaustive labors and ecclesiastical agitations. The latter were always repugnant to my best instincts; and the historical tasks I had planned seemed to justify a resolute escape from

them. The General Conference at Buffalo presented an opportunity which I accepted with an unutterable sense of relief. During some years I have stood apart from our public controversies, asking of all parties the favor of being, as far as possible, ignored in their combats, their party schemes and official promotions; assuring myself, however vainly, that, at last, they themselves might acknowledge I had chosen the better part, and had worthily, however unsuccessfully, attempted a better service for our common cause. Confining myself to quiet pastoral duties, besides my literary tasks, among a people who have facilitated my aims, by a generosity equal to their abundant means, and amid a picturesque and tranquilizing scenery, singularly congenial with meditative labors, I have spent what has been the happiest and most hopeful period of my public life, in the attempt to furnish the Church with such a history of its providential career as it may not willingly let die. I have admitted no interruption of this plan of life, except a short interval, devoted to a biographical tribute to our common and venerated friend, Dr Nathan Bangs.

The three volumes of the "History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century," etc., are devoted to a survey of general Methodism centralizing in the British "Wesleyan Connection." While, therefore, it is as exact a record of the latter organization as I could make it, the foreign ramifications of the movement could be treated only in outline, and in their essential relations to the central body. This is especially the case with the Methodist Episcopal Church, whose fruitful history might well claim as many, if not more, volumes than that of British Methodism. In the preface to that work intimation is, therefore, given of a further history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, not as a *completion*, but as a *complement* to it, and frequently, in marginal notes, the reader is referred to this future record for fuller information on American subjects. My design has been, in fine, to write a distinct history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as complete as I could make it, and though complementary to the preceding work, yet as independent of the latter as if this had not been written. You have in the present volumes the first installment of my new work. I have endeavored to render these volumes complete in themselves, so that no contingency, which may interfere with the further prosecution of my plan, can impair the present portion of it. They are conclusive as a history of the "Planting" of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, narrating the progress of Methodism in the United States from its introduction to

its Episcopal organization at the memorable "Christmas Conference," and its subsequent outspread generally in the nation, and presenting, in its organic completeness, the theological and disciplinary platform on which the whole fabric of the denomination has been constructed.

An author is seldom a good judge of the probable popular interest of his book. I have endeavored to hold all such considerations in abeyance; a full and a correct history of the Church is what we have needed, and I have attempted to provide it. If, however, the reader shall share a tithe of the interest with which I have traced the details of this narrative, and if, especially, he shall have patience to follow me in the future and grander development of their results, I presume to hope that he will find the history of this portion of the "kingdom of God" on earth as significant and as impressive as the cotemporaneous history of any other religious body. The interest of the present volumes must, however, be quite different from that of the preceding work, on the general history of Methodism; in the latter imposing characters appear immediately on the scene, the Wesleys, Whitefield, Fletcher, with many other great men, and not a few saintly women, and the historic movement goes on with singular unity and almost epic interest to its culmination in its centenary jubilee. In the present volumes we wander over a hardly defined field, gathering fragmentary and scattered, though precious materials; brought together and rightly placed, these fragments at last stand out a goodly and stately structure, a shining "city of God;" but the vague, preliminary, if not tedious toil of gathering and shaping them must precede the imposing construction. Many really great characters—Asbury, Coke, Whatcoat, Garrettson, Lee, etc.—enter the scene, but they hardly yet assume their heroic proportions. We see hem but ascending to those high positions where they will hereafter appear as colossal historic statues, at once the architects and the ornaments of the great temple. If, however, I were amenable to the bar of criticism for the comparative popular interest of the two productions, I might well hesitate to appear before the public with the present volumes, after the unexpected favorable reception of the former work. The historian must not *invent* his materials, in the popular sense of the word; he can only do so in its etymological sense; success in this respect is, therefore, the only just question of criticism. To this inquisition I willingly submit these volumes. The first historian of Methodism, Jesse Lee, gives to the period I have gone over, but little more than half of his small volume, inserting large official documents; Bangs gives it

but one volume, inserting still larger documents, including nearly an entire copy of the Discipline; I have added to their materials enough to make, with no slight condensation, two volumes. These additional materials have mostly come to light since the publication of the works of my predecessors. I flatter myself that their importance, aside from their popular interest, will justify my attempt to provide this new narrative of our early history.

I have had to meet one somewhat invidious necessity—the correction of not a few errors, especially chronological mistakes, in our primitive documents and in some of my historical predecessors. I must doubtless bear similar criticism, if my work shall be deemed worthy of it; and I shall heartily welcome it, especially if it shall be conducted with the candor and cordiality which I have endeavored to exemplify. Our early records are so defective, they were printed with such apparent haste, and many of the events I have narrated are so incoherently given by them, that it can hardly be presumed I have not made grave mistakes. To the many students of our denominational history, in all parts of the country, I look for such corrections as shall enable me, hereafter, to rectify largely my pages.

I have thus, my dear friend, taken advantage of your name and confidence to say many things, unusual in a preface, and liable, perhaps, to be deemed superfluous, if not egotistical. If the proverbial whimsicality of authors should not be admitted as my excuse, I might add that there are reasons, known to yourself if not to other readers, why these somewhat personal remarks should be excused.

With grateful affection,

ABEL STEVENS.

MAMARONECK PARSONAGE, *September*. 1864.

CONTENTS.

INTRODUCTION.

	Page
Wesley and Watt	15
The Steam-Engine	16
Its Importance to America	17
Necessity of the Methodist System for the Moral Wants of the Country	17
Development of the Nation after the Revolution	17
Great Growth of its Population	18
The "Great West"	25
Ecclesiastical Methods of Methodism	26
Its Development in England	29
It is not a new Dogmatic System	29
Its Theology	29
Arminianism	30
Whitefield	31
John and Charles Wesley	32
Bishop Böhler	35
The Genius of Methodism	36
Evangelical Life	36
Development of its Ecclesiastical Peculiarities	39
Its Catholicity	40
Its Persecutions	41
Its Success	42

BOOK I.

FROM THE ORIGIN OF AMERICAN METHODISM TO THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

CHAPTER I.

FOUNDERS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Wesley among the Irish	47
The "Palatines"	48
Their Historical Importance	49
Their Origin	49
Their Character	50
Their Emigration to America	51
Philip Embury	52
He Founds Methodism in the United States	55
Captain Webb	57
Sketch of his Life and Character	57
His Style of Preaching	59
Barbara Heck	62
The First American Methodist Chapel	62
Embury Retires from New York	67
His Death	68
Barbara Heck	68
Curious Controversy: Note	69

CHAPTER II.

RISE OF METHODISM IN MARYLAND.

Page
Robert Strawbridge..... 71
Traces of him in Ireland..... 71
His Character..... 72
His Emigration to America... 72
His Methodistic Labors 73
Richard Owen, the first native Methodist Preacher..... 74
Watters's Eulogy on him..... 74
Strawbridge's latter Years.... 75
His Death and Funeral..... 78
Asbury's Opinion of him..... 79
Original Humility of American Methodism 80

CHAPTER III.

EARLY LAY EVANGELISTS.

Immigration..... 81
The Methodists of New York apply to Wesley for Preachers 82
Interest in England for America 83
Robert Williams hastens to the Colonies..... 83
Ashton of Ashgrove..... 83
Williams's Services..... 84
He founds Methodism in Virginia 85
Rev. Devereaux Jarratt..... 85
Jesse Lee..... 85
William Watters, the first Native Itinerant..... 85
Williams's Death..... 85
Asbury's Eulogy on him..... 86
Other Testimonials to his Character and Usefulness... 86
John King..... 87
He preaches in the Potter's Field of Philadelphia..... 88
He Introduces Methodism into Baltimore..... 88
Preaches in the Streets..... 89
Traces of his Life 90
His Faults..... 90
Wesley's characteristic Letter to him: Note..... 91

CHAPTER IV.

WESLEY'S FIRST MISSIONARIES TO AMERICA.

Page
Appeals to Wesley for Missionaries..... 92
Dr. Wrangle..... 92
John Hood and Lambert Wilmer of Philadelphia..... 92
Wesley's Appeal to his Conference 93
The Response..... 93
A liberal Contribution for America 93
The Conference..... 93
Leeds in Methodist Missionary History..... 94
Sketch of Richard Boardman.. 95
His Perils by Water..... 96
Instrumental in the Conversion of Jabez Bunting.. ... 97
Joseph Pilmoor..... 98
A Tempestuous Voyage..... 98
Arrival of the Missionaries in America..... 99
Pilmoor preaching in the Streets of Philadelphia..... 99
His Letter to Wesley..... 99
Boardman on the Way to New York..... 100
Whitefield greets them..... 101
Presentiment of his Death.... 101
His last Evangelical Triumphs 101
Last Sermon..... 102
Last Exhortation..... 102
Jesse Lee at his Tomb: Note. 103
Boardman in New York..... 103
His Success..... 104
John Mann..... 104
Pilmoor 104
His Letter to Wesley..... 104
Singular Introduction into New Rochelle..... 107

CHAPTER V.

WESLEY'S AMERICAN MISSIONARIES, CONTINUED.

America appears in Wesley's Minutes 110
Appeal for more Preachers ... 110
More sent..... 111
Early Life of Francis Asbury. 111
Methodism in Staffordshire... 113
Asbury becomes a Methodist.. 114
His Character..... 115
He embarks for America..... 117
Richard Wright, his Companion..... 118
Their Arrival in Philadelphia. 119
Number of Methodists in America 120
St. George's Chapel..... 120
The First Philadelphia Methodists 121

Page
Bohemia Manor..... 122
Asbury in New Jersey..... 123
Peter Van Pelt..... 123
Staten Island 124
Methodism there..... 125
Israel Disosway..... 125
Asbury enters New York..... 125
He Contends for the Itinerancy 126
He extemporizes a Circuit..... 128
In Philadelphia..... 128
The Itinerancy in Operation.. 128
Asbury's Preaching and Spirit 130
Wesley appoints him "Assistant" or Superintendent.... 131
His Labors in Maryland..... 132
In Baltimore..... 132
A Quarterly Conference 132
Asbury forms Classes in Baltimore..... 134
First Methodist Chapel there. 135
Asbury's Baltimore Circuit... 138
Quarterly Conference..... 138

CHAPTER VI.

WESLEY'S AMERICAN MISSIONARIES, CONTINUED.

Captain Webb Recruiting the American Itinerancy..... 141
Charles Wesley opposes him . 141
Webb Appeals to the Conference..... . 142
Thomas Rankin and George Shadford 142
Rankin's Early Life..... 143
Methodism in the British Army 143
Whitefield..... 143
Rankin's Conversion..... 145
He becomes a Preacher 145
His Success..... 146
His Appointment to America. 147
George Shadford's Early Life. 148
His Conversion 153
His Usefulness..... 154
He joins Wesley's Itinerancy. 155
Hears Captain Webb's Appeal at Leeds, and Departs for America 155
Wesley's Letter to him..... 156
Scenes of the Voyage..... 156
Arrival at Philadelphia..... 157
Rankin's Invocation..... 157
Rankin and Asbury in New York..... 158
Rankin in John-street Church 158
Shadford in New Jersey..... 159

CHAPTER VII.

FIRST CONFERENCE—RETURN OF ENGLISH PREACHERS.

Page
First American Methodist Conference 160
Its Members..... 160
Statistics 161
Laxity of Discipline..... 161
Proceeding of the Conference. 162
The Sacramental Controversy. 163
Robert Strawbridge steadfast to the American Claim..... 164
Its Result..... 165
Germ of the "Book Concern" 165
Appointments 166
Return of Pilmoor and Boardman..... 166
Further traces of Boardman... 167
His Death..... 167
Further traces of Pilmoor..... 169
He leaves the Denomination.. 169
Retains his Interest for it..... 169
Richard Wright returns to England. 172
Final traces of Captain Webb. 172
His Death..... 174

CHAPTER VIII.

NATIVE EVANGELISTS.

William Watters, the first Native Methodist Itinerant.... 175
His Early Life 175
His Conversion..... 179
He becomes an Itinerant..... 181
Robert Williams 181
Rev. Devereux Jarratt..... 182
Great Religious Excitement in Virginia..... 182
Watters on the Eastern Shore of Maryland..... 187
Methodism in Kent County. . 188
Its First Chapel..... 188
Philip Gatch, the second Native Itinerant 189
His Early Life.. 191
Nathan Perigau..... 191
Gatch's Conversion..... 192
He Begins to Preach 194
Itinerates in New Jersey..... 194
Benjamin Abbott..... 195
His Character..... 196
His Early History..... 196
His Moral Struggles..... 197
His Conversion 200
The Fall of Abraham Whitforth 202

Page
Abbott Begins to Preach..... 204
Power of his Word..... 205
A Remarkable Example..... 205
Daniel Ruff..... 206

CHAPTER IX.

PRINCIPAL EVANGELISTS, 1773, 1774.

Rankin after the Conference.. 208
Pilmoor..... 209
Boardman..... 209
Rankin in Maryland..... 210
A Quarterly Meeting at the Watters Homestead..... 211
Departure of Pilmoor..... 211
Rankin in New York..... 211
Shadford in New York..... 212
His Character and Usefulness. 212
Asbury in Maryland..... 214
Exaltation of his Spirit..... 215
Baltimore..... 216
Otterbein..... 215
German Methodism..... 217
"United Brethren in Christ". 218
Sketch of their History..... 218
Death of Otterbein..... 219
Boehm and Gueting..... 220
Otterbein and Asbury's Poetry: Note..... 221
Advancement of Methodism in Maryland..... 222
New Chapels..... 222
Wright in Virginia..... 223
Its first Two Chapels..... 223
Williams in Virginia..... 224
Old Brunswick Circuit..... 224
Jarratt..... 224
Jesse Lee..... 224
Freeborn Garrettson..... 225

CHAPTER X.

CONFERENCE AND PROGRESS OF 1774.

The Conference of 1774.. ... 227
Rankin's Disciplinary Rigor... 228
Asbury..... 228
Watters and Gatch..... 229
Statistics..... 229
Progress in the Middle Colonies 229
The Itineracy..... ... 230
Its Effect on the Ministry .. 230
Page
Asbury's Sufferings and Labors in New York..... 231
In Philadelphia..... 233
In Baltimore..... 233
Otterbein..... 234
Williams's Success in Virginia 234
Asbury and the Revolution... 235
Perry Hall and Henry Dorsey Gough..... 235
Rankin at Quarterly Meetings in Maryland..... 240
Shadford in Maryland..... 241
Remarkable Incident..... 242
Robert Lindsey..... 243
Edward Dromgoole..... 243
Richard Webster..... 244
Their Success..... 244
Philip Gatch on Frederick Circuit..... 245
Shadford's Rule for Effective Preaching..... 245
Gatch on Kent Circuit..... 245
Hostile Rencounters..... 246
"Parson Kain"..... 247
Gatch's Success..... 248
He Returns to Frederick Circuit..... 249
Attacked by Ruffians..... 249
Enters New Jersey..... 250
Whitworth and Ebert..... 250
Benjamin Abbott in New Jersey..... 251
An Encounter at Deerfield.... 251
Sanctification..... 252
Abbott in Salem..... 253
His Treatment of Diseased Minds..... 254
His Success..... 255
Physical Phenomena of Religious Excitement..... 261
John King and Robert Williams in Virginia..... 262
Jesse Lee..... 263
Jarratt..... 263
Great Success..... 263
Additional Missionaries from England..... 264
James Dempster..... 264
Martin Rodda..... 265
William Glendenning..... 265
Asbury and Rankin..... 266

BOOK II.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, TO THE EPISCOPAL ORGANIZATION OF METHODISM, 1775–1784.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLUTION AND METHODISM.

Page

Effect of the Revolution on Methodism 269
Providential Character of the Revolution..... 270
It was the Normal Consequence of the Colonial History of the Country..... 271
It was not at first Rebellion, but a Struggle for the Maintenance of the British Constitution..... 272
Chatham's Vindication of the Colonies..... 274
Effect of the War on Religion. 275
Desertion of their Church by the English Clergy..... 276
Return of English Methodist Preachers..... 277
Sufferings of the Methodist Itinerants..... 277
Asbury's Integrity..... 278
Wesley's "Calm Address" to the Colonies 282
The Sarcasm of Junius..... 282
Wesley and Johnson..... 283
Wesley corrects his Opinion on the Colonial Question.... 283
He Predicts the Success of the Americans..... 284
His Address to his American Preachers..... 285

CHAPTER II.

LABORS AND TRIALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Asbury's Course respecting the Revolution..... 288
He goes to Norfolk..... 289
Alarms of War..... 289
Burial of Robert Williams.... 290
Methodists in Virginia 291
Asbury on Brunswick Circuit. 291
Shadford there..... 292
His great Success..... 293
Examples..... 293
Conversion of a Dancing-master 293
Of a Planter..... 294
The "Great Revival" of Virginia 295
Jarratt's Account of it..... 298
Jarratt and Asbury 300
Asbury in Baltimore 300
His Opinion of Wesley's Pamphlet on the Colonial Question 301
Visits the Hot Sulphur Springs 302
On Baltimore Circuit..... 304
His Character..... 304
Embarrassments from the War 306
Return of the English Preachers..... 306
Asbury in Peril..... 305
In Retirement..... 306
Abduction of Judge White.... 307
Eminent Methodists..... 310
Judge White..... 310
Mary White..... 314
Senator Bassett..... 316
Bohemia Manor..... 318
Judge Barrett..... 319
"Barrett's Chapel"..... 319
Asbury's Visits to it in later Life 320
His Influence on the Higher Circles of Society..... 320
Abroad again 322
His extraordinary Travels 323
He meets Coke at Barrett's Chapel 326

CHAPTER III.

LABORS AND TRIALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Rankin Itinerating 328
At Perry Hall..... 328
Joins Shadford in Virginia ... 329
The "Great Revival" there .. 329
Jarratt 331
Rankin Returns to England... 335
His Death 336

Page

His Administration in America 337
His Treatment of Asbury..... 337
Martin Rodda..... 338
He Intermeddles with Politics. 338
Clowe's Rising and Execution. 338
Persecution of the Methodists. 339
Shadford..... 339
His Last Interview with Asbury 340
His Trials..... 340
His Return to England..... 341
Further Traces of his Life.... 341
His Death..... 342

CHAPTER IV.

LABORS AND TRIALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Watters Itinerating in Maryland and Virginia..... 344
Sanctification..... 348
Watters Locates..... 351
Freeborn Garrettson..... 352
His Early Life..... 352
His Conversion..... 352
He Emancipates his Slaves . 354
Goes about doing Good..... 354
Begins to Preach..... 355
Ezekiel Cooper..... 355
Garrettson Itinerating in Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware 356
Scenes in his Ministry..... 356
Hartley Preaching through the Windows of Talbot Jail.... 357
Garrettson Attacked on the Highway..... 359
Caleb Boyer..... 360
Garrettson Mobbed at Dover.. 361
Pioneering..... 362
He is cast into Prison..... 369
His Success..... 372

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER REVIEW OF THE PERIOD OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Philip Gatch itinerating..... 374
John Cooper's Trials..... 374
Gatch and Parson Kain..... 375
His Rencounters on Frederick Circuit..... 375

Page

He is "Tarred" by a Mob.. . 376
Escapes Conspirators..... . 377
His Courage..... 378
On Hanover Circuit..... 378
Jarratt..... 378
Trials on Sussex Circuit..... 379
He Locates..... 380
His continued Usefulness..... 380
Emancipates his Slaves..... 380
Simplicity of the Primitive Minutes..... 381
Benjamin Abbott in New Jersey..... 381
Wonderful Physical Effects of his Preaching..... 382
Methodist Opinion on such Phenomena..... 383
Abbott's Character..... 384
His Colloquial Ministrations.. 387
He goes abroad preaching in New Jersey..... 387
Extraordinary Examples of his Usefulness..... 387
James Sterling..... 392
Abbott and Sterling in Delaware and Pennsylvania..... 392
Remarkable Scenes..... 393
Martin Boehm..... 395
Abbott among the Germans... 396
"Physical Phenomena" again 397
Scenes in Maryland..... 401
Abbott's "Thunder-gust Sermon"..... 402
Revisits Delaware..... 403
Extraordinary Effects..... 405
Jesse Lee..... 406
He preaches in a Military Camp 408
Description of a Primitive Conference..... 410
His Labors and Character.... 411
Methodism during the Revolution..... 415
Church building..... 416
Startling Scene in Salem, N. J. 417
The British in New York..... 417
John-street Church..... 418
John Mann and Samuel Spraggs 418
British Persecutions..... 420
Central Methodism..... 422

HISTORY

OF THE

METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

INTRODUCTION.

Wesley and Watt — The Steam-Engine — Its Importance to America — Necessity of the Methodist System for the Moral Wants of the Country — Development of the Nation after the Revolution — Great Growth of its Population — The "Great West" — Ecclesiastical Methods of Methodism — Its Development in England — It is not a new Dogmatic System — Its Theology — Arminianism — Whitefield — John and Charles Wesley — Bishop Böhler — The Genius of Methodism — Evangelical Life — Development of its Ecclesiastical Peculiarities — Its Catholicity — Its Persecutions — Its Success.

In the year 1757 John Wesley, traveling and preaching, night and day, throughout the United Kingdom, arrived in Glasgow. He "walked to its College, saw the new library, with the collection of pictures," and admired examples of the art of Raphael, Vandyke, and Rubens. Had he possessed the foresight of the Hebrew seers, he would have paused, as he crossed the University quadrangle, to admire a coming and nobler proof of genius; for it was in this same year that a young man, obscure, diffident, but with a mind burdened with mighty anticipations, and destined to become recognized as a chief benefactor of the human race, came to Glasgow to seek employment as an artisan, where, failing to find it among the citizens, he found sympathy in the learned Faculty

of the University, and was allowed a humble chamber within its walls. The room is reached from the quadrangle by a spiral stairway, and is still preserved in its original rudeness, as too sacred to be altered. In the court below he put out a sign as "Mathematical Instrument Maker to the University." He lived on poor fare, and eked out his subsistence by combining, with his work for the Faculty, the manufacture of musical instruments; he made organs, and repaired flutes, guitars, and violins; but meanwhile studied assiduously the laws of physics, that he might apply them in an invention which was to produce the "greatest commercial and social revolution in the entire history of the world,"[1] a revolution with which Methodism was to have important relations.

After some years of struggle with want, sickness, the treachery of men, and the disappointment of his hopes, James Watt, the young artisan of Glasgow University, gave to the world the Steam-Engine, and to-day the aggregate steam-power of Great Britain alone equals the manual capability for labor of more than four hundred millions of men; more than twice the number of males capable of labor on our planet.[2] Its aggregate power throughout the earth is equal to the male capacity, for manual work, of five or six worlds like ours. The commerce, the navigation, the maritime warfare, the agricul ture, the mechanic arts of his race have been revolutionized by the genius of this young man. His invention was introduced into Manchester about, seventy years ago, but now, in that city and its vicinity, are more than fifty thousand boilers, with an aggregate power of a million horses.

[1] Quarterly Review, London, 1858.

[2] Emerson (English Traits, chap. 10,) enlarges the estimate a third · "Equal to six hundred millions of men, one man being able, by the aid of steam, to do the work which required two hundred and fifty men to accomplish fifty years ago."

The invention of the steam-engine was more important to the new than to the old world. It was vastly important to the latter through the former, for it was the potent instrument for the opening of the boundless interior of the North American continent to the emigration of the European populations, and the development of that immense commerce which has bound together and enriched both worlds,[3] and by which New York city alone now exceeds, in amount of tonnage, more than twice over, all the commercial marine of Great Britain in the year before Watt's invention.[4]

The great rivers of the new world, flowing with swift current, could convey their barges toward the sea, but admitted of no return. The invention of Watt, applied by the genius of Fulton, has conquered their resistance, and opened the grand domain of the Mississippi valley for the formation of mighty states in a single generation, and marshaled the peoples of Europe to march into the wilderness in annual hosts of hundreds of thousands.

Wesley, who might have saluted, in the quadrangle of Glasgow University, the struggling and dependent man whose destiny it was to achieve these stupendous changes, was himself actually preparing the only means that could supply the sudden and incalculable moral wants which they were to create. Methodism, with its "lay ministry" and its "itinerancy," could alone afford the ministrations of religion to the overflowing population; it was to lay the moral foundations of many of the

[3] As late as 1784 an American vessel took to Liverpool eight bales of cotton; the custom officers did not believe they could have come from America, and seized them as contraband. In 1857 Liverpool imported a million and a half bales of cotton from the United States. (London Quarterly Review, 1859.)

[4] Compare article "Watt," in Appleton's Biographical Encyclopedia. with Bancroft's History of the United States, vol. v, p. 159.

great states of the West. The older Churches of the colonies could never have supplied them with "regular" or educated pastors in any proportion to their rapid settlement. And in the sudden growth of manufacturing cities in both England and America, occasioned by Watt's invention, Methodism was to find some of the most urgent necessities for its peculiar provisions.

Watt and Wesley might well then have struck hands and bid each other godspeed at Glasgow in 1757: they were co-workers for the destinies of the new world.

The rapid settlement of the continent, especially after the Revolution, presented indeed a startling problem to the religious world. Philosophers, considering only its colonial growth, anticipated for it a new era in civilization. Hume perceived there "the seeds of many a noble state—an asylum for liberty and science." Montesquieu predicted for it freedom, prosperity, and a great people; Turgot, that "Europe herself should find there the perfection of her political societies and the firmest support of her well-being." Berkeley pointed to it as the seat of future empire. Locke and Shaftesbury studied out a constitutional polity for a part at least of its empire. The fervid spirit of Edwards, seeing, with Bossuet, in all history only the "History of Redemption," dreamed, in his New England retirement, of a millennium which was to dawn in the new world, and thence burst upon the nations and irradiate the globe. The coming Revolution was discerned, and its vast consequences anticipated by sagacious minds a half-century before the Declaration of Independence. The frequent Indian wars, and especially the "Old French War," concluded but twelve or thirteen years before the Revolution, trained the whole manhood of the colonies to arms, and prepared it to cope

with the veteran military strength of the mother country. The Treaty of Peace in 1763 was virtually a treaty of American Independence. It gave to England the dominion of the continent, (excepting the south-western Spanish possessions,) from Baffin's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico, from ocean to ocean. It was impossible that this vast colonial domain should long continue under foreign rule. Choiseul, the astute minister of Louis XV., seeking to retain a remnant of the French-American territory, suggested to the English cabinet the importance of the French jurisdiction in Canada, to keep alive in the Anglican colonies a sense of dependence on British protection, and failing of his design, yielded readily, exclaiming, "We have caught them at last!" France, by alliance with the revolting colonies, was to wreak full retribution on her ancient enemy.

The Revolution verified these anticipations, and in its train came events quite anomalous in the religious history of nations. No Protestant prelate had hitherto lived upon the continent; it now presented not merely a Church without a bishop, and a state without a king, but a state territorially larger than any other in the civilized world without an ecclesiastical Establishment. The State, separated from the Church, enfranchising it by divorcing it. Religion was to expect no more legal support, except temporarily, in a few localities where the old system might linger in expiring. The novel example was contrary to the traditional training of all Christian states, and might well excite the anxiety of Christian thinkers for the moral fate of the new world. How were Christian education, Churches, and pastors to be provided for this boundless territory and its multiplying millions of souls? If the "voluntary principle" were as legitimate as its advocates believed,

yet could it possibly be adequate to the moral wants of the ever-coming armies of population which, under the attractions of the new country, were about to pour in upon and overspread its immense regions; armies far surpassing the northern hordes, whose surging migrations swept away the Roman empire, and with which was to be transferred to the new world much of the worst barbarism of the old?

The colonial training of the country had been, providentially, to a great extent religious, as if preparatory for its future history.

Puritanism, with whatever repulsive characteristics, had produced in New England the best example of a commonwealth, in the true sense of that term, which the civilized world had yet seen: the best in morals, intelligence, industry, competence, and household comfort; a people to whom the Church and the school-house were as indispensable as their homes. "We all," they declared in the "oldest of American written constitutions," "we all come into these parts of America to enjoy the liberties of the Gospel in purity and peace." "He that makes religion as twelve and the world as thirteen has not the spirit of a New England man." Protestant missions were to have their birth there: the colonial provision, in 1736, for "preaching the Gospel to the Indians" was "the first united Protestant missionary effort in behalf of the heathen world." It preceded by a generation that of the Dutch, in Ceylon, under the auspices of their East India Company. It led to the formation of a Society for Missions among the English nonconformists, which again led, according to Bishop Burnet, to the organization of the "Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge" in the national Church. In about half a century after King James's translation of the Bible,

Massachusetts gave it, through Eliot, to her Indians: the first Bible printed in America. The healthful influence of New England was to permeate the whole country. It was to give from its pure and hardy stock one third of the white population of the nation, and especially to extend its race and type of character over all the northern tier of states, from the Atlantic to beyond the Mississippi. Rhode Island was settled by the Baptists for "soul liberty." If the Dutch colony of New York was founded chiefly in commercial designs, still it represented the principles of the Protestant Reformation. West New Jersey and Pennsylvania were settled by the Quakers in the best spirit of their peaceful faith. Delaware was colonized by the Swedes; Gustavus Adolphus, the Scandinavian hero of Protestantism, designed the colony, and designed it to be "a blessing to the whole Protestant world." He fell fighting for his faith at Lützen, but left the design to Oxenstiern, who zealously promoted it, declaring that its "consequences would be favorable to all Christendom, to Europe, to the whole world." The descendants of the settlers have been scattered over the country, and constitute probably one part in two hundred of its population.[5] If the United States have verified the prediction of Oxenstiern, the Swedes have worthily shared in its accomplishment. Maryland was settled by Roman Catholics with a religious design—for religious liberty, and with a spirit, on the part of its founder, befitting such a design. When the settlers, led by the son of Baltimore, first landed, they "took possession of the province 'for their Saviour' as well as for their lord the King!" The cavalier colonists of Virginia, if not very admirable examples of their religion, nevertheless promptly introduced the Church of the parent land.

[5] Bancroft's estimate for 1837, vol. iii, chap. 15.

The first legislature, chosen by the people, established the Church, and the next year it had a pastor for every six hundred of the population. The colonies of the Carolinas, with less religious interest, felt the religious influence of the older settlements, being founded chiefly by emigrants from Virginia and New England, with a wholesome infusion of Quaker, Irish and Scotch Presbyterian, and Huguenot blood and virtue. The Huguenots, encouraged by Coligny, first attempted the colonization of South Carolina for the enjoyment of their religion. They gave the name of their king, Charles IX., to the Carolinas. They failed, but their Protestant countrymen have not failed to constitute an important increment of the population of the states which have grown from the two colonies, as, also, of the Atlantic states generally from New York to Georgia. After the revocation of the Edict of Nantes they came, in large numbers, to America, and the Carolinas were their favorite refuge. They brought with them "the virtues of the Puritans without their bigotry." Georgia was colonized by Protestant Englishmen, highland Scots, and Moravians, as "the place of refuge for the distressed people of Britain and the persecuted Protestants of Europe." The Jew was admitted, though not the Papist. The two Wesleys accompanied thither its founder, the benevolent Oglethorpe, the friend of their father and the friend of all men. It was Whitefield's favorite resort among the colonies. It interdicted spirituous liquors and slavery. The Cap of Liberty was on its seal; and its motto—*Non sibi sed aliis*, Not for themselves but others—declared the philanthropic purpose of its projectors.[6]

[6] "It is remarkable that in every charter granted to the Southern colonies the 'propagation of religion' is mentioned as one of the reasons for the planting of them." Baird: Religion in America, book iii, p. 6.

Thus were most of the colonies founded in religious motives, their infancy moulded by religion, their adolescence invigorated and hardened by war—the preparation for their independence and liberty, and for a new civilization which should be based on the sovereignty of the people, and should emancipate the new world from the ecclesiastical and political traditions of the old.

But now came a solemn crisis in the history of these providentially trained populations, scattered almost from the frozen zone to the tropics, treading a virgin soil of exhaustless resources, and flushed with the consciousness of a new development of humanity. Their territory was to enlarge more than two thirds; their population beyond any recorded example. Though, in their colonial growth, Edwards, inspired by the "Great Awakening," saw the vision of the millennium flashing upon their mountains and valleys, yet the Revolution and national consolidation, endowing them with new and unexampled powers, oppressed them with new problems. A state may exist without a king, a Church without a bishop, a nation without an ecclesiastical establishment; but a people cannot be without religion, without God; they had better cease to be. And where now, with a political system which recognized no one religion by tolerating all, which made no provision for the spiritual wants of the people, should men, who believed religion to be the fundamental condition of civil righteousness and liberty, look for the safety of the marvelous destiny that had opened upon the new world?

The Revolution ended with the treaty of peace in 1783, and then commenced a national progress never anticipated in the most sanguine dreams of statesmen. The inventive genius of Watt and Fulton was to wave a wand of miraculous power over the land; and not only the

Valley of the Mississippi, stretching over twenty degrees of latitude and thirty of longitude, with twelve millions of souls in our day, was to open, like a new world, to navigation and settlement; but the nearly seven thousand miles of "principal rivers" flowing into the Atlantic, the nearly five thousand flowing into the Gulf of Mexico, the eighteen thousand flowing into the Mississippi—the sea river; the five thousand flowing into the Pacific: the thirty-five thousand miles of principal rivers—above a third more than the circumference of the globe; besides the minor streams, making, with the former, more than forty thousand miles of navigable waters, were to be thrown open as the highways of population and commerce. The masses of Europe, in millions, were to enter these highways. The growth of population was to transcend the most credulous anticipations. The one million and a quarter (including blacks) of 1750, the less than three millions of 1780, were to be nearly four millions in 1790; nearly five and a third millions in 1800; more than nine and a half millions in 1820; nearly thirteen millions in 1830. Thus far they were to increase nearly thirty-three and a half per cent. in each decade. Pensioners of the war of the Revolution were to live to see the "Far West" transferred from the valleys of Virginia, the eastern base of the Pennsylvania Alleghanies, and the center of New York, to the great deserts beyond the Mississippi; to see mighty states, enriching the world, flourish on the Pacific coast, and to read, in New York, news sent the same day from San Francisco. Men, a few at least, who lived when the population of the country was less than three millions, were to live when it should be thirty millions. If the ratio of increase should continue, this population must amount, at the close of our century, but thirty-six years hence, to one

hundred millions; exceeding the present population of England, France, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Denmark. A step further in the calculation presents a prospect still more surprising: by the year 1930, which not a few living in our day shall see, this mighty mass of commingled races will have swollen to the aggregate of two hundred and forty-six millions, nearly equaling the present population of all Europe.

This growth of population, could it take place in an old country, supplied for ages with religious and educational foundations, would suggest anxious moral questions to the reflections of the philosopher and Christian; but here it was to occur in the wildernesses of savage life. "Westward the star of empire takes its way," sang Berkeley as he contemplated the grand prospect; to the West this overwhelming flood was to sweep, and thither was to move with it the power of the nation, the political forces which were to take their moral character from these multitudes and impart it to the nation, if not to much of the rest of the world. The center of "representative population" has continually tended westward. In 1790 it was twenty-two miles east of Washington; it has never been east of the national metropolis since, and never can be again. At the census of 1800 it had been transferred thirty miles west of Washington; in 1820 it was seventy-one miles west of that city; in 1830 one hundred and eight miles. Its westward movement from 1830 to 1840 was no less than fifty-two miles; more than five miles a year. During about fifty years it has kept nearly the same parallel of latitude, having deviated only about ten miles southward, while it has advanced about two hundred miles westward. Thus were the political destinies of the country to move into the "Great West," the arena of its moral and religious struggles.

Obviously then the ordinary means of religious instruction—a "settled" pastorate, a "regular" clergy, trained through years of preliminary education—could not possibly meet the moral exigencies of such an unparalleled condition. Any unfavorable contingencies, hanging over the federal organization or unity of the nation, could hardly affect these exigencies, except to exasperate them. A religious system, energetic, migratory, "itinerant," extempore, like the population itself, must arise; or demoralization, if not barbarism, must overflow the continent.

Methodism entered the great arena at the emergent moment. It was preparing to do so while Wesley stood in the quadrangle at Glasgow beneath the window within which Watt was preparing the key to unlock the gates of the Great West. In the very next year Wesley was to find the humble man who was to be its founder in the United States. About the same time a youth in Staffordshire was preparing, through many moral struggles, to become its chief leader and the chief character in the ecclesiastical history of the new world, the first resident bishop of Protestantism in the western hemisphere. Methodism was not to supersede there other forms of faith, but to become their pioneer in the opening wilderness, and to prompt their energies for its pressing necessities. It was to be literally the founder of the Church in several of the most important new states, individually as large as some leading kingdoms of the old world. It was to become at last the dominant popular faith of the country, with its standard planted in every city, town, and almost every village of the land. Moving in the van of emigration, it was to supply, with the ministrations of religion, the frontiers from the Canadas to the Gulf of Mexico, from Puget's Sound to the Gulf of California.

It was to do this indispensable work by means peculiar to itself; by districting the land into Circuits which, from one hundred to five hundred miles in extent, could each be statedly supplied with religious instruction by but one or two traveling evangelists, who, preaching daily, could thus have charge of parishes comprising hundreds of miles and tens of thousands of souls. It was to raise up, without delay for preparatory training, and thrust out upon these Circuits thousands of such itinerants, tens of thousands of Local or Lay Preachers and Exhorters, as auxiliary and unpaid laborers, with many thousands of Class-leaders who could maintain pastoral supervision over the infant societies in the absence of the itinerant preachers, the latter not having time to delay in any locality for much else than the public services of the pulpit. Over all these circuits it was to maintain the watchful jurisdiction of traveling Presiding Elders, and over the whole system the superintendence of traveling Bishops, to whom the entire nation was to be a common diocese. It was to govern the whole field by Quarterly Conferences for each circuit, Annual Conferences for groups of circuits, quadrennial Conferences for all the Annual Conferences. It was to preach night and day, in churches where it could command them, in private houses, school-houses, court-houses, barns, in the fields, on the highways. It was to dot the continent with chapels, building them, in our times at least, at the rate of one a day. It was to provide academies and colleges exceeding in number, if not in efficiency, those of any other religious body of the country, however older or richer. It was to scatter over the land cheap publications, all its itinerants being authorized agents for their sale, until its "Book Concern" should become the largest religious publishing house in the world. The best authority for the moral

statistics of the country, himself of another denomination, was at last to "recognize in the Methodist economy, as well as in the zeal, the devoted piety and the efficiency of its ministry, one of the most powerful elements in the religious prosperity of the United States, as well as one of the firmest pillars of their civil and political institutions."[7] The historian of the Republic records that it has "welcomed the members of Wesley's society as the pioneers of religion;" that "the breath of liberty has wafted their messages to the masses of the people; encouraged them to collect the white and negro, slave and master, in the greenwood, for counsel on divine love and the full assurance of grace; and carried their consolation and songs and prayers to the furthest cabins in the wilderness."[8]

It has been said that Methodism thus seems to have been providentially designed more for the new world than for the old. The coincidence of its history with that of the United States does indeed seem providential; and, if such an assumption might have appeared presumptuous in its beginning, its historical results, as impressed on all the civil geography of the country and attested by the national statistics, now amply justify the opinion. Here, if anywhere, the results of Methodism appear to confirm the somewhat bold assertion of a philosophic thinker, not within its pale, who affirms "that, in fact, that great religious movement has, immediately or remotely, so given an impulse to Christian feeling and profession, on all sides, that it has come to present itself as the starting-point of our modern religious history; that the field-preaching of Wesley and Whitefield, in 1739, was the event whence the religious epoch,

[7] Baird: "Religion in America," p. 497.

[8] Bancroft, vol. vii, p. 261.

now current, must date its commencement; that back to the events of that time must we look, necessarily, as often as we seek to trace to its source what is most characteristic of the present time; and that yet this is not all, for the Methodism of the past age points forward to the next-coming development of the powers of the Gospel."[9]

But what was this phenomenon of modern religious history, this "religious movement of the eighteenth century, called Methodism?"

It was not a new dogmatic phase of Protestantism. They err who interpret its singular history chiefly by its theology. Its prominent doctrine of justification by faith was the prominent doctrine of the Reformation. Its doctrines of the "witness of the Spirit" and of "sanctification" had been received, substantially, if not with the verbalism of Methodism, by all the leading Churches of Christendom.[10] Wesley, Fletcher, and Sellon appealed to the standards of the Anglican Church in support of their teachings in these respects. Wesley taught no important doctrine which is not authorized by that Church, unless it be what is called his Arminianism. But even this was dominant in the Anglican Church in certain periods of its history. He interpreted its apparently Calvinistic Article by the history of the Articles, and, with many eminent authorities, denied it a strictly Calvinistic significance. Arminianism prevailed in the English Church under the Stuarts. Sancroft, Barrow, Burnet, South, Chillingworth, Cudworth, Bull, More, Hammond, Wilkins, Tillotson, Stillingfleet were Armin-

[9] Isaac Taylor's "Wesley and Methodism:" Preface.

[10] On the general acceptance of the doctrine of Assurance by the Churches of the Reformation, see Sir William Hamilton's "Discussions in Philosophy," etc., p. 508. London.

ians.[11] The "Theological Institutes of Episcopius," says an author, but eighteen years before the birth of Wesley, "were generally in the hands of our students of divinity in both universities as the best system of divinity that had appeared."[12] Arminianism had spread, "as is well known, over much of the Protestant regions of Europe. The Lutheran Churches came into it; and in England there was a predisposing bias in the rulers of the Church toward the authority of the primitive fathers, all of whom before the age of Augustine, and especially the Greek, are acknowledged to have been on that side which promoted the growth of this Batavian Theology."[13] Arminianism had been tried, then, but with no such results as accompanied it under Methodism. If it be replied that its legitimate influence had been neutralized, by the latitudinarian errors associated with it, by many of the English divines mentioned, and by its great continental representatives, Grotius, Casaubon, Vossius, Le Clerc, Wetstein, and innumerable others, yet it had been taught with evangelical purity by Arminius himself and his immediate associates,[14] but with no such power as attended Methodism. In fine, none of the important doctrines taught by Wesley and his followers were peculiar to them. That their theology was necessary to their system, of course, cannot be denied; but, we repeat, it was not peculiar to the system. It had existed, every one of

[11] Hallam, "Literature of Europe," vol. ii, p. 287, Am. ed.

[12] Bull's Works, vol. viii, p. 257. 1858.

[13] Hallam, vol. ii, p. 43.

[14] Professor Stuart, of Andover, says, (Creed, etc., of Arminius, Biblical Repository, vol. i,) "Let the injustice, then, of merging Pelagius and Arminius together no more be done among us, as it often has been." "Most of the accusations of heresy made against him [Arminius] appear to be the offspring of suspicion, or of a wrong construction of his words."

its essential dogmas, in the general Church, without the remarkable efficacy of Methodism. Calvinistic Methodism was powerful alike with Arminian Methodism in the outset, and failed at last only by the failure of its ecclesiastical methods. Methodism differed from other religious bodies, in respect to theology, chiefly by giving greater prominence, more persistent inculcation to truths which they held in common, particularly to the doctrines of Justification by Faith, Assurance, and Sanctification. These were the current ideas of its Theology, but they were rendered incandescent by its spirit, and effective by its methods.

In these two facts—the spirit, and the practical system of Methodism—inheres the whole secret, if secret it may be called, of its peculiar power.

The "Holy Club" was formed at Oxford in 1729, for the sanctification of its members. The Wesleys there sought personal purification by prayer, watchings, fastings, alms, and Christian labors among the poor. George Whitefield joined them for the same purpose; he was the first to become "renewed in the spirit of his mind;" but not till he had passed through a fiery ordeal, till he had spent "whole days and weeks prostrate on the ground in prayer," "using only bread and sage tea" during "the forty days of Lent, except on Saturdays and Sundays." He became morbid in his spiritual earnestness; he lost the power of memory at times; he "selected the coarsest food, wore patched raiment, uncleaned shoes, and coarse gloves." He prayed "till the sweat ran down his face, under the trees, far into the winter's nights;" but he escaped at last his ascetic delusions, and was saved "by laying hold on the cross by a living faith;" receiving "an abiding sense of the pardoning love of God, and a full assurance of faith." He was

nooted and pelted with missiles in the streets by his fellow-students, but was preparing meanwhile to go forth a sublime herald of the new "movement:" a preacher of Methodism in both hemispheres; the greatest preacher, it is probable, in popular eloquence, of all the Christian ages.

John and Charles Wesley continue the ineffectual ascetic struggle, poring over the pages of the "Imitatione," and the "Holy Living and Dying;" in all things "living by rule;" fasting excessively; visiting the poor and the prisoner. They find no rest to their souls, untroubled, as yet, by any dogmatic question, but seeking only spiritual life. Wesley proposes to himself a solitary life in the "Yorkshire dales;" "it is the decided temper of his soul." His wise mother interposes, admonishing him prophetically "that God had better work for him to do." He travels some miles to consult "a serious man." "The Bible knows nothing of solitary religion," says this good man, and Wesley turns about with his face toward that great career which was to make his history a part of the history of his country and of the world. "Holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord," is the cry of his spirit; but he still finds it not. "I am persuaded," he writes, "that we may know if we are *now* in a state of salvation, since that is expressly promised in the Holy Scriptures to our sincere endeavors, and we are surely able to judge of our own sincerity." Taylor's Holy Living and Dying teaches him utter purity of motive; "instantly he resolves to dedicate *all* his life to God; all his thoughts and words and actions; being thoroughly convinced there is no medium." The dedication is made, but the light does not come. The two brothers determine to seek it in the wilderness of the new world — to "forsake all," become missionaries to

the colonists and savages, and perish, if need be, for their souls. They accompany Oglethorpe to Georgia, and on the voyage they witness the joyous faith of Moravian peasants and artisans in the perils of storms; they are convinced that they themselves have no such faith. They question the Moravians, and get improved views of the spiritual life, but still grope in the dark. They learn more from the Moravian missionaries in the colonies, but sink into deeper anxiety. They preach and read the Liturgy every day to the colonists, and teach their children in schools. They fast much, sleep on the ground, refuse all food but bread and water. John goes barefooted to encourage the poor children who had no shoes. The colonists recoil from their severities, and they return to England defeated.

In sight of Land's End John writes in his Journal: "I went to America to convert Indians, but O, who shall convert me? who is he that will deliver me from this evil heart of unbelief?" On arriving in England he again writes: "This then have I learned, in the ends of the earth, that I am 'fallen short of the glory of God.' I have no hope but that, if I seek, I shall find Christ." "If," he adds, "it be said that I have faith, for many things have I heard from many such miserable comforters, I answer, so have the devils a *sort* of faith, but still they are strangers to the covenant of promise. The faith I want is a sure trust and confidence in God, that through the merits of Christ my sins are forgiven, and I reconciled to the favor of God."

The Moravians meet him again in London, where they maintain several religious meetings in private houses. Both the Wesleys, turning away from St. Paul's, Westminster Abbey, the dead Churches, seek light from heaven in these humble assemblies. They become the

associates of Peter Böhler, a Moravian preacher, and later a Moravian bishop, a man of learning from the University of Jena, who, in good Latin, converses with them on divine subjects. John Wesley cleaves to him. "February 7th, 1738—a day much to be remembered," writes the troubled inquirer when he first meets Böhler; "I did not willingly lose an opportunity of conversing with him." The Moravian expounds to him faith, justification by faith, sanctification by faith; he begins to "see the promise, but it is afar off." Böhler accompanies the Wesleys to Oxford, where he daily delivers two Latin discourses on the doctrines of grace. A hundred devout hearers attend these meetings; but none with more eagerness than the Wesleys. John Wesley has many walks and conversations with him in the venerable cloisters and neighboring groves. After one of these walks Wesley writes: "By him, in the hand of the great God, I was, on Sunday, [March 5th, 1738,] clearly convinced of unbelief, of the want of that faith whereby alone we can be saved." About ten days later Böhler himself writes in London: "I had an affectionate conversation with John Wesley. He informed me of the opposition he had met with among some clergymen to whom he had unfolded his present convictions, declaring that faith was not yet his own. He asked me what he ought to do; whether he ought to tell the people his state or not. I answered that I could give him no rule in this respect, that he must follow the promptings of the Saviour; adding, however, that I earnestly wished he would not remove this grace so far into the future, but would believe that it is near to him, that the heart of Jesus is open, and his love to him very great. He wept bitterly while I was talking upon this subject, and afterward asked me to pray with him. I can freely affirm

that he is a poor broken-hearted sinner, hungering after a better righteousness than that which he has hitherto had, even the righteousness of Christ. In the evening he preached from the words 'we preach Christ crucified,' etc. He had more than four thousand hearers, and spoke in such a way that all were amazed—many souls were awakened." "John Wesley," continues Böhler, in another document, "returned to Oxford to-day. I accompanied him a short distance. He once more opened to me his whole heart. I entreated him to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, for that then *not only he but many others with him would be saved*"—a prophetical intimation of the future career of Wesley, says a Moravian authority. "He told me that now he found the grace of the Saviour everywhere in the Bible, and felt convinced that Jesus is a mighty Saviour and has done much for poor sinners. I have good hope that this friend of mine will become wholly the property of the Lord."[15] Thus prepared, Wesley attends a Moravian meeting and hears Luther's Preface to the Epistle of the Romans read; the truth breaks upon his mind; "I felt," he writes, "my heart strangely warmed; I felt I did trust in Christ alone for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." Charles Wesley had three days before experienced the same change; "I now," he writes, "found myself at peace with God. I went to bed still sensible of my own weakness; I humbly hope

[15] Böhler's manuscript autobiography and letters, at Bethlehem, Pa. Also his Letters to Count Zinzendorf, published (with a portrait of Böhler) by Rev. T. Reichel. These works are yet untranslated. See "*The Moravian*" (*Bethlehem, Pa.*) for October 24, and November 7 and 14, 1861. Dr. Sack gives, in Niedner's *Zeitschrift fur Historische Theologia*, Gotha, (second number, 1864,) a historical account of Wesley's relations to the Moravians, and a translation of his Journal during his visit to Herrnhut in 1738.

to feel more and more so; yet confident of Christ's protection." Such is "regeneration," according to Methodism; such the first great truth of its proclamation to the world.

The next month John Wesley preaches "Salvation by faith" before the University of Oxford. He has begun his career. The Churches of London are startled by his sermons; by no new truth, but the emphasis and power with which he declares old and admitted truths of the Anglican theological standards, the "new birth," the "witness of the Spirit," and, subsequently, the doctrine of "sanctification," a doctrine which, as taught by Wesley, is in accordance with the highest teachings of the Anglican Church, "is," says a strict churchman, "essentially right and important; combining, in substance, all the sublime morality of the Greek fathers, the spiritual piety of the Mystics, and the divine philosophy of our favorite Platonists. Macarius, Fenelon, Lucas, and all their respective classes, have been consulted and digested by him, and his ideas are essentially theirs."[16] His doctrine of faith seemed like a new truth to the apathetic formalism of the Church, but it was the doctrine of its Homilies and of its best theologians.[17]

The genius of Methodism was, then, evangelical life, and in theology, its chief concern was with those doctrines which are essential to personal religion. "What was the rise of Methodism?" asked Wesley in his conference of 1765. He answered, "In 1729 my brother and I read the Bible; saw inward and outward *holiness* therein;

[16] Knox: "Bishop Jebb's Thirty Years' Correspondence," Letter xix.

[17] "I venture to avow it, as my conviction, that either Christian faith is what Wesley here describes, or there is no proper meaning in the word." Coleridge: Note to Southey's Life of Wesley, chap. 20.

followed after it, and incited others so to do. In 1737 we saw this holiness comes by *faith*. In 1738 we saw we must be *justified* before we are sanctified. But still *holiness* was our point; inward and outward holiness. God then thrust us out to raise a *holy* people."

Whitefield had startled the metropolitan Churches before Wesley's arrival, and, flaming with apostolic zeal, had left for Georgia, the vessel which bore him passing in the channel that which brought Wesley; but he soon returned, and now the Methodistic movement began in good earnest. Its apostles were excluded from the pulpits of London and Bristol; they took the open field, and thousands of colliers and peasants stood weeping around them. They invaded the fairs and merry-makings of Moorfields and Kennington Common; ten, twenty, sometimes fifty, and even sixty thousand people made their audiences.[18] Their singing could be heard two miles off, and Whitefield's voice a mile. The lowest dregs of the population were dragged out of the moral mire and purified. The whole country was soon astir with excitement; the peasantry of Yorkshire, the colliers of Kingswood and Newcastle, the miners of Cornwall, gathered in hosts around the evangelists, for they saw that here were at last men, gowned and ordained, who cared for their neglected souls. Societies were organized for their religious training; without, however, the remotest design of forming a sect or creating a schism. Terms of membership in these societies were necessary, and thus originated the "General Rules," a purely catholic document, with not one dogmatic proposition: the terms of Methodist communion throughout

[18] Philips's Life of Whitefield, chap. iv. History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century, called Methodism, etc., i, 122.

the world. Places for their assemblies must be provided, and on the 12th of May, 1739, the foundations of a building were laid in Bristol: the first chapel founded by Methodism in the world. On the 14th of November the "Old Foundry," in London, was opened for worship by Wesley.[19] Methodism thus early began its edifices, its material fortifications. In this year also its first hymn book, its virtual Liturgy, was published. It is the recognized epoch of the denomination.

The societies need instructors in the absence of Wesley, who now begins to "itinerate" through the kingdom, for the clergy will not take charge of them, and exclude them from the communion table. Wesley appoints intelligent laymen to read to them the Holy Scriptures. One of these, Thomas Maxfield, sometimes explains his readings; he is a man of superior talents; the Countess of Huntingdon (now an influential Methodist) hearing him often, encourages him to preach. Wesley, on learning the novel fact, revolts from it, for he is yet a rigid churchman; but his mother knows Maxfield, and warns her son not to resist the providence of God, for she believes this is a providential provision for the great work begun in the land. Wesley at last acknowledges the obvious truth, and thus begins the lay ministry of Methodism, whose ten thousand voices were soon to be heard in most of the ends of the earth. The societies multiply faster than the lay preachers; these must therefore travel from one assembly to another, and thus begins the "itinerancy." The travels of the itinerants must be assigned definitive boundaries, and thus arises the "circuit system." The societies must provide for their chapel debts and other expenses; the members of that of Bristol are distributed into companies of twelve,

[19] The Bristol chapel was begun first, the Foundry opened first.

which meet weekly to pay their "pennies" to a select member, appointed over each, and thus originates the financial economy of Methodism. They find time, when together, for religious conversation and exhortation, and thus begins the "class-meeting," with its "leader," the nucleus of almost every subsequent Methodist society in the world, and a necessary pastoral counterpart to the itinerancy. Many men of natural gifts of speech, who are not able to travel as Preachers, appear in the societies; they are licensed to instruct the people in their respective localities, and thus arise the offices of "Local Preachers" and "Exhorters," laborers who have done incalculable service, and have founded the denomination in the United States, the West Indies, Africa, and Australia. Wesley finds it necessary to convene his itinerants annually for consultation and the arrangement of their plans of labor, and thus is founded (June 25, 1744) the Annual Conference. Several of these bodies have to be formed in the extended field of the Church in the United States, and, for their joint action on important measures, it becomes necessary to assemble them together once in four years, and thus arises the American General Conference.

Wesley has been pronounced one of the greatest of ecclesiastical legislators,[20] and the historian of his country has declared that "his genius for government was not inferior to that of Richelieu."[21] Wesley believed that not himself, but divine Providence legislated the system of Methodism. He devised no system; he but accepted the suggestions of Providence as they seemed evolved in the progress of the movement. To him expediency was a moral law, and nothing expedient that was

[20] Buckle's History of Civilization.

[21] Macaulay's Essays, vol. i, p. 221. Third Lond. Ed.

not morally right. He knew not to what his measures would come, nor was he anxious about the future. As yet he was a staunch churchman: he lived and died loyal to the Anglican Church. The Methodists, he insisted, were not raised up to form a sect, but to spread "scriptural holiness over these lands." Their mission being purely spiritual, their practical or disciplinary system was founded purely in their spiritual designs. An Arminian himself, Wesley admitted Calvinists to membership in his societies. "One condition, and only one," he said, "is required—a real desire to save their souls." "I desire," he writes to the Methodistic churchman, Venn, "to have a league, offensive and defensive, with every soldier of Christ." "We do not impose," he declared, "in order to admission, any opinions whatever;" "this one circumstance is quite peculiar to Methodism." "We ask only, 'Is thy heart as my heart? If it be, give me thy hand.'" "Is there any other society in Great Britain or Ireland so remote from bigotry?—so truly of a catholic spirit? Where is there such another society in Europe or in the habitable world?" In organizing the Methodist Episcopal Church, he gave it Articles of Religion abridged from the English Articles; but he did not insert or require them in the General Rules, or terms of membership. They were an "indicatory rather than an obligatory" symbol, as we shall hereafter see.

Though faithful to the national Church, he saw, in advanced life, that the treatment of his people by the clergy would sooner or later alienate them from the Establishment, but that and all other contingencies he committed to Divine Providence. His task was to work while the day lasted; to do the duty nearest to him; God would take care of the rest.

Such, then, was Methodism — such its spirit and its methods. "It was a revival Church in its spirit; a missionary Church in its organization."[22]

It spread rapidly over Great Britain, into Scotland, into Ireland, to Nova Scotia, the United States, the West Indies, France, Africa, India, and was to achieve its most remarkable triumphs among the Cannibal Islands of the Southern Ocean. Wesley became almost ubiquitous in the United Kingdom, preaching daily. His lay preachers soon filled the land with the sound of the Gospel. Chapels rose rapidly in most of the country. Hostilities also arose; mobs assailed the itinerants; their chapels were pulled down: for months, and even for years, riots were of almost constant occurrence. In some sections the rabble moved in hosts from village to village, attacking preachers and people, destroying not only the churches, but the homes of Methodists. In

[22] A churchman has declared that when Wesley appeared the Anglican Church was "an ecclesiastical system under which the people of England had lapsed into heathenism, or a state hardly to be distinguished from it;" and that Methodism "preserved from extinction and reanimated the languishing Nonconformity of the last century, which, just at the time of the Methodistic revival, was rapidly in course to be found nowhere but in books."—*Isaac Taylor's Wesley and Methodism* pp. 56, 59. A high American authority says, "That something of vital Christianity exists among professed believers of every name; that the doctrine of justification by faith is generally understood and preached; that we are not blind Pharisees, or dead Formalists, or practical Socinians and Deists; we may trace the cause in great part (we cannot tell how largely) to the Holy Club of Oxford Methodists."—*Bibliotheca Sacra*, Jan., 1874, art. iv. The results of Methodism have been so extraordinary that Methodist writers can hardly record them (however legitimate and necessary to its history) without an apparent tone of exaggeration. Such candid concessions as are here cited from non-Methodistic authorities relieve much the difficulties of my attempt to record truthfully a providential phase of our common Christianity, which, aside from sectarian biases, must be grateful to all devout Protestants. I know of no Methodist writers who claim more for the denomination than is here accorded.

Staffordshire "the whole region was in a state little short of civil war." In Darlaston, Charles Wesley could distinguish the houses of the Methodists by their marks of violence as he rode through the town. At Walsall he found the flag of the rioters waving in the market-place, their head-quarters. In Lichfield "all the rabble of the country was gathered together, and laid waste all before them." The storm swept over nearly all Cornwall. Newcastle was in tumult. In London even occurred formidable mobs. In Cork and Dublin they prevailed almost beyond the control of the magistrates. Methodism had, in fine, to fight its way over nearly every field it entered in Great Britain and Ireland. The clergy and the magistrates were often the instigators of these tumults.[23] Not a few of the itinerants were imprisoned, or impressed into the army and the navy; some were martyred. But the devoted sufferers held on their way till they conquered the mob, and led it by thousands to their humble altars. Howell Harris, amid storms of persecution, planted Methodism in Wales, where it has elevated the popular religious condition, once exceedingly low, above that of Scotland, and has in our day more than twelve hundred churches, Arminian and Calvinistic. Wesley traversed Ireland as well as Great Britain. He crossed the channel forty-two times, making twenty-one visits; and Methodism has yielded there some of its best fruits. Whitefield, known as a Calvinist, and forming no societies, was received in Scotland. His congrega-

[23] The cotemporary books of Methodism abound in proofs. Buckle says, "The treatment which the Wesleyans received from the clergy many of whom were magistrates, shows what would have taken place if such violence had not been discouraged by the government. Wesley has himself given many details, which Southey did not think proper to relate, of the calumnies and insults to which he and his followers were subjected by the clergy."—*History of Civilization*, vol. i, p. 304.

tions were immense, filling valleys or covering hills, and his influence quickened into life its Churches. He aided Harris in founding Calvinistic Methodism in Wales. The whole evangelical dissent of England still feels his power. With the Countess of Huntingdon, he founded the Calvinistic Methodism of Great Britain; but such was the moral unity of both parties, the Arminian and the Calvinistic, that the essential unity of the general Methodistic movement was maintained, awakening to a great extent the spiritual life of both the national Church and of the Nonconformists, and producing most of those "Christian enterprises" by which British Christianity has since been spreading its influence around the globe. The British Bible Society, most of the British Missionary Societies, Tract Societies, the Sunday-school, religious periodicals, cheap popular literature, negro emancipation, Exeter Hall with its public benefits and follies, all arose directly or indirectly from the impulse of Methodism.

Whitefield crossed the Atlantic thirteen times and journeyed incessantly through the colonies, passing and repassing from Georgia to Maine like a "flame of fire." The Congregational Churches of New England, the Presbyterians and the Baptists of the Middle States, and the mixed colonies of the South, owe their later religious life and energy mostly to the impulse given by his powerful ministrations. The "great awakening" under Edwards had not only subsided before Whitefield's arrival, but had reacted.[24] Whitefield restored it; and

[24] Dr. Holmes says in his American Annals, "That the zeal which had characterized the New England Churches of an earlier period had, previous to Whitefield's arrival, subsided, and a lethargic state ensued." Dr. Chauncey ("Reasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England") declares that the reaction which had set in had depressed the religious condition of the colonies to as low a point as that described in Edwards's Narrative.

the New England Churches received under his labors an inspiration of zeal and energy which has never died out. He extended the revival from the Congregational Churches of the Eastern to the Presbyterian Churches of the Middle States. In Pennsylvania and New Jersey, where Frelinghuysen, Blair, Rowland, and the two Tennents had been laboring with evangelical zeal, he was received as a prophet from God, and it was then that the Presbyterian Church took that attitude of evangelical power and aggression which has ever since characterized it. These faithful men had begun a humble ministerial school in a log-cabin "twenty feet long and nearly as many broad." "The work is of God," said Whitefield, "and therefore cannot come to naught." The fame of Princeton has verified his prediction. "Nassau Hall received a Methodistic baptism at its birth, Whitefield inspirited its founders, and was honored by it with the title of A.M.; the Methodists in England gave it funds; and one of its noblest presidents (Davies) was a correspondent of Wesley, and honored him as a 'restorer of the true faith.'" Dartmouth College arose from the same impulse. It received its chief early funds from the British Methodists, and bears the name of one of their chief Calvinistic associates, whom Cowper celebrated as "The one who wore a coronet and prayed." Whitefield's preaching, and especially the reading of his printed sermons in Virginia, led to the founding of the Presbyterian Church in that state, whence it has extended to the South and South-west. "The stock from which the Baptists of Virginia and those in all the South and South-west have sprung was also Whitefieldian."[25] The founder of the Freewill Baptists of the United States was converted under the last preaching of Whitefield.

[25] Meth. Quart. Rev., Oct. 1855, and Benedict's Hist. of the Baptists.

Though Whitefield did not organize the results of his labors, he prepared the way for Wesley's itinerants in the new world. When he descended into his American grave they were already on his tracks. They came not only to labor, but to organize their labors; to reproduce amid the peculiar moral necessities of the new world both the spirit and the methods of the great movement as it had at last been organized by Wesley in the old, and to render it before many years superior in the former, in both numerical and moral force, to the Methodism of the latter.[26]

Such is a rapid review of the early development both of the United States and of Methodism preparatory for those extraordinary advancements which both have made. The next year, as has been remarked, after Wesley stood in the quadrangle of Glasgow University, where Watt about the same time hung out his sign, the Methodist apostle stood preaching in the open air in an obscure village of Ireland to the people who were destined to form the first Methodist Church in the

[26] Figures are proverbially veracious. We have authentically the statistics of the leading Christian denominations of the United States for the first half of our century. They attest conclusively the peculiar adaptation of the ecclesiastical system of Methodism to the moral wants of the country. During the period from 1800 to 1850 the ratio of the increase of the ministry of the Protestant Episcopal Church has been as 6 to 1, of its communicants as 6 to 1; of the ministry of the Congregationalists as 4 to 1, of their communicants as 2⅔ to 1; of the ministry of the regular Baptists as 4 to 1, of their communicants as 5⅔ to 1; of the ministry of the Presbyterians ("old and new schools") as 14 to 1, of their communicants as 8½ to 1; of the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church (North and South) as 19⅓ to 1, of its communicants as 17⅔ to 1. It must be borne in mind, however, that most if not all these religious bodies have, during the whole of this period, been more or less pervaded by the Methodistic impulse given by Whitefield and his successors, and much of their success is unquestionably attributable to that fact. See Chris. Adv. & Jour., Feb. 19, 1860, and "An Itinerant Ministry;" a sermon, by Rev. S. Clements, p. 19. New York, 1860.

United States. In two years more they arrived at New York, in six years more they were organized as a society, and thenceforward, coincidently with the opening of the continent by the genius of Watt and Fulton, Methodism has maintained Christianity abreast of the progress of immigration and settlement throughout the states and territories of the Union.

We are now prepared to trace the humble beginnings and extraordinary progress of its mission.

BOOK I.

FROM THE ORIGIN OF AMERICAN METHODISM TO THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

CHAPTER I.

FOUNDERS OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH.

Wesley among the Irish — The "Palatines" — Their Historical Importance — Their Origin — Their Character — Their Emigration to America — Philip Embury — He founds Methodism in the United States — Captain Webb — Sketch of his Life and Character — His Style of Preaching — Barbara Heck — The First American Methodist Chapel — Embury retires from New York — His Death — Barbara Heck — Curious Controversy: Note.

John Wesley appreciated the Irish character in both its virtues and its defects. Ireland was a favorite resort to him; he crossed the channel forty-two times, as we have seen, spending at least six years of his laborious life on the island. Though he was sometimes mobbed, and even hung in effigy, these hostilities were but local, and could not affect his estimate of the people generally. They are "an immeasurably loving people," he writes. During a sermon in the open air they would not cover their heads in a hail-storm, though he advised them to do so. "Indeed, so civil a people as the Irish in general I never saw," he says, "either in Europe or America." As "perfect courtesy" could be found in their cabins as in the courts of London or Paris. His Irish congregations were generally "in tears," but "the water spread too wide to be deep." He

found it necessary to preach to them with a more alarming tone than he used in any other part of the United Kingdom, in order to make any lasting impression upon their versatile minds. Yet Ireland was to yield him many of the most eminent of his coadjutors: Adam Clarke, Henry Moore, Thomas Walsh, Gideon Ouseley, and scores more. Irishmen were to found Methodism, or aid in founding it, in the North American British Provinces, in the United States, in the West Indies, in Australia, in Africa, in India. "They sleep in missionary graves, awaiting the trumpet of the resurrection, in nearly all parts of the globe to which Methodism has borne the cross."

In the year 1758 Wesley visited the county of Limerick. His Journal reports there a singular community, settled in Court Mattress, and in Killiheen, Balligarrane, and Pallas, villages within four miles of Court Mattress. They were not native Celts, but a Teutonic population. Having been nearly half a century without pastors who could speak their language, they had become thoroughly demoralized: noted for drunkenness, profanity, and "utter neglect of religion." But the Methodist itinerants had penetrated to their hamlets, and they were now a reformed, a devout people. They had erected a large chapel in the center of Court Mattress. "So did God at last provide," writes Wesley, "for these poor strangers who, for fifty years, had none who cared for their souls." At later visits he declares that three such towns as Court Mattress, Killiheen, and Balligarrane were hardly to be found anywhere else in Ireland or England. There was "no cursing or swearing, no Sabbath breaking, no drunkenness, no ale-house in any of them." "They had become a serious, thinking people, and their diligence had turned all their land into a garden. How will these poor

foreigners rise up in the day of judgment against those that are round about them."[1]

But the most interesting fact respecting this obscure colony was not yet apprehended by Wesley, or he would have wondered still more at their providential history. The Methodism of the New World was already germinating among them; in about two years the prolific seed was to be transplanted to the distant continent, and at the time of Wesley's death (about thirty years later) its vigorous boughs were to extend over the land from Canada to Georgia, from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, sheltering more than sixty-three thousand Church members,[2] and two hundred and fifty itinerant preachers. In about thirty years after Wesley's death (1820) American Methodism was to advance to the front of the great "movement," with a majority of more than seventeen thousand over the parent Church, including all its foreign dependencies, and thenceforward the chief numerical triumphs of the denomination were to be in the western hemisphere.

But how came this singular people, speaking a foreign tongue, into the west of Ireland?

The troops of Louis XIV., under Turenne, devastated, in the latter part of the seventeeth century, the Palatinate, on the Rhine. Its population was almost entirely Protestant; the strongest reason for the relentless violence of the bigoted monarch and his army. The whole country was laid waste; the Elector Palatine could see from the towers of Manheim, his capital, no less than two cities and twenty-five villages on fire at once. The peaceable peasants fled before the invaders by thousands to the lines of the English general, Marlborough. Queen Anne

[1] Journals, 1758, '60, '62.

[2] The Minutes of 1791 give nearly thirteen thousand more, but are inaccurate. See Bangs's Hist. of M. E. Church, I, 337.

sent ships to convey them from Rotterdam to England. More than six thousand arrived in London, reduced to dependent poverty. The sympathy of Protestant England relieved their sufferings, and commissioners were appointed by the government to provide for them. They were encamped and fed on Blackheath and Camberwell Commons. Popish rule and persecution followed the invasion of the Palatinate, and thousands more of its virtuous and thrifty peasants deserted it for refuge in England and other countries. Nearly three thousand were sent by the British government to America in 1710, and became valuable additions to the colonies of New York, Pennsylvania, and North Carolina. Of those who remained in England about fifty families emigrated to Ireland,[3] where they settled, near Rathkeale, in the county of Limerick. They were allowed eight acres for each person, young and old, for which they were to pay a small annual rent to the proprietor, Lord Southwell. The government paid their rents for twenty years, made them freeholders, and furnished each man with a musket, enrolling him in the free yeomanry of the county as "German Fusileers." A list of those who "settled contiguous to each other on Lord Southwell's estates" has been published; on it are the names of Embury, Heck, Ruckle, Switzer, Guier, and others associated with the original Methodists of New York. An Irish historian represents them as industrious, "better fed and clothed than the generality of Irish peasants. . . . Their houses are remarkably clean, to which they have a stable, cow-houses, a lodge for their plow, and neat kitchen gardens. The women are very industrious. In short, the Palatines have benefited the country by increasing tillage, and are

[3] Wesley estimates them at one hundred and ten families; additions were probably made to their number after the first settlement.

a laborious, independent people, who are mostly employed on their own small farms."[4]

Such was the origin of the "Irish Palatines," and thus did the short-sighted policy of Louis XIV. scatter these sterling Protestants of the Rhine to bless other lands, as his bigoted folly, in the revocation of the Edict of Nantes, sent half a million of his own best subjects to enrich, by their skill and virtues, Switzerland, Germany, England, and the North American colonies. His attempt to suppress Protestantism in the Palatinate led, through the emigration of these Irish settlers, to one of the most energetic developments of Protestantism recorded in the modern history of religion.

"On a spring morning in 1760" (says an Irish authority apparently familiar with the local facts) "a group of emigrants might have been seen at the custom-house quay, Limerick, preparing to embark for America. At that time emigration was not so common an occurrence as it is now, and the excitement connected with their departure was intense. They were Palatines from Balligarrane, and were accompanied to the vessel's side by crowds of their companions and friends, some of whom had come sixteen miles to say 'farewell' for the last time. One of those about to leave—a young man, with a thoughtful look and resolute bearing—is evidently the leader of the party, and more than an ordinary pang is felt by many as they bid him farewell. He had been one of the first-fruits of his countrymen to Christ, had been the leader of the infant Church, and in their humble chapel had often ministered to them the word of life. He is surrounded by his spiritual children and friends, who are anxious to have some parting words of counsel and instruction. He enters the vessel, and from its side

[4] Ferrar's "History of Limerick," pp. 413, 414.

once more breaks among them the bread of life. And now the last prayer is offered; they embrace each other; the vessel begins to move. As she recedes uplifted hands and uplifted hearts attest what all felt. But none of all that vast multitude felt more, probably, than that young man. His name is Philip Embury. His party consisted of his wife, Mary Switzer, to whom he had been married on the 27th of November, 1758, in Rathkeale Church; two of his brothers and their families; Peter Switzer, probably a brother of his wife; Paul Heck and Barbara his wife; Valer Tettler; Philip Morgan and a family of the Dulmages. The vessel arrived safely in New York on the 10th of August, 1760. Who that pictures before his mind that first band of Christian emigrants leaving the Irish shore but must be struck with the simple beauty of the scene? Yet who among the crowd that saw them leave could have thought that two of the little band were destined, in the mysterious providence of God, to influence for good countless myriads, and that their names should live long as the sun and moon endure? Yet so it was. That vessel contained Philip Embury, the first Class-leader and local preacher of Methodism on the American continent, and Barbara Heck, 'a mother in Israel,' one of its first members, the germ from which, in the good providence of God, has sprung the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States; a Church which has now, more or less under its influence, about seven millions of the germinant mind of that new and teeming hemisphere! 'There shall be a handful of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth.' "[5]

[5] The Irish Evangelist, 1860. See also sketches by Dr. G. C. M Roberts in Lednum's "Rise of Methodism," etc., pp. 26, 27.

Philip Embury was born in 1728 or in 1730.[6] His family seem not to have been among the original German settlers in Ireland, but to have arrived there some years later.[7] He bore among his neighbors the character of an industrious, sober, honest, and obliging young man. Gier, an aged Palatine, was schoolmaster to the little community of Balligarrane, and taught Embury the elements of knowledge in German. He afterward studied in an English school of the neighborhood. He was apprenticed to a carpenter, and became skillful in his craft. Without remarkable talents, he was esteemed not only an upright, but an intelligent youth. There remain fragmentary manuscripts from his pen which show that he was an elegant writer. His orthography is faultless; the punctuation, and certain abbreviations customary at that day, are given with perfect accuracy. One of these records, in a bold if not beautiful chirography, is of vital

[6] I am inclined to the first date. "Is it true that Philip Embury died in 1775? I think not. A granddaughter of Philip Embury, living in St. Armand, C. E., has in her possession an antiquated blank book, containing, among other things, the grandfather's family record, written by himself. In the same book Samuel Embury wrote as follows: 'My father, Philip Embury, died in August, 1773, aged forty-five years.' The record does not give the date of Embury's birth; but he was baptized 'Ye 29th of 7ber, [September,] 1728.' And as his own children were baptized before they were four weeks old, it is safe to conclude that he was born in August or September, 1728."—*Letter of Rev. G. G. Saxe to the Author.*

[7] "Another tradition may not be as readily credited. It is this: That a brother of Philip Embury, but three years older than himself, was born on the continent. Whether Philip was born there, or after the parents had removed to Ireland, they are not so certain, though some incline to think that he too was of German birth as well as German blood. Still we must remember that if P. Embury's brother, but three years older than himself, was born in Germany, the family must have emigrated to Ireland some twenty years after the main body of the Palatines. The main body, if not all who settled in Ireland, came in the reign of Queen Anne, in the first decade of the century."—*Letter of Rev. P. P. Harrower to the Author.*

significance in his history. It reads thus: "On Christmas day, being Monday, the 25th of December, in the year 1752, the Lord shone into my soul by a glimpse of his redeeming love, being an earnest of my redemption in Christ Jesus, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."[8]

It was in this year, of his conversion, that he first saw Wesley, who was then traveling in the west of Ireland. With Gier he ministered faithfully to his neighbors, as a local preacher, in the intervals of the visits of the itinerant preachers on their circuit. There was apparently a tone of deep pathos in his quiet and somewhat melancholy nature. He was diffident; he shrank from responsibilities, and wept much while preaching.

It can hardly be doubted that on arriving in New York Embury, a Class-leader and also a licensed Local Preacher in Ireland, attempted some religious care of the few Methodists who had accompanied him; but they fell away from their steadfastness in the temptations of their new condition, and he, yielding to discouragement, appears not to have used his office as a Preacher till the autumn of 1766. One of our best authorities in Methodistic antiquarian researches says: "The families who accompanied him were not all Wesleyans—only a few of them; the remainder were members of the Protestant Church in Ireland, but made no profession of an experimental knowledge of God, in the pardon of sin and adoption. After their arrival in New York, with the exception of Embury and three or four others, they all finally lost their sense of the fear of God, and became open worldlings. Some subsequently fell into greater depths of sin than others. Late in the year 1765 another vessel arrived in New York, bringing over Paul Ruckle, Luke Rose, Jacob Heck, Peter Barkman, and Henry

[8] Wakeley's "Lost Chapters," chap. 2.

Williams, with their families. These were Palatines, some of them relatives of Embury, and others his former friends and neighbors. A few of them only were Wesleyans. Mrs. Barbara Heck, who had been residing in New York since 1760, visited them frequently. One of the company, Paul Ruckle, was her eldest brother. It was when visiting them on one of these occasions that she found some of the party engaged in a game of cards; there is no proof, either direct or indirect, that any of them were Wesleyans, and connected with Embury. Her spirit was roused, and, doubtless emboldened by her long and intimate acquaintance with them in Ireland, she seized the cards, threw them into the fire, and then most solemnly warned them of their danger and duty. Leaving them, she went immediately to the dwelling of Embury, who was her cousin. It was located upon Barrack-street, now Park Place. After narrating what she had seen and done, under the influence of the Divine Spirit and with power she appealed to him to be no longer silent, but to preach the word forthwith. She parried his excuses, and urged him to commence at once in his own house, and to his own people. He consented, and she went out and collected four persons, who, with herself, constituted his audience. After singing and prayer he preached to them, and enrolled them in a class. He continued thereafter to meet them weekly. Embury was not among the card-players, nor in the same house with them."[9]

The little company soon grew too large for Embury's

[9] Dr. Roberts to the author. See Lednum's Rise of Methodism in America, p. 27, and also a letter to Wesley signed "T. T." (Thomas Taylor) in Atmore's Methodist Memorial, (Appendix, Manchester, 1802, p. 579.) This letter positively determines the date of Embury's labors in New York. It will be observed that I differ from most of our older historical writers in several dates. I must refer the reader to my mar-

house; they hired a more commodious room in the neighborhood, where he continued to conduct their worship; its expenses being met by voluntary contributions. In a few months there were two "classes," one of men, the other of women, including six or seven members each. No little excitement began soon to prevail in the city on account of these meetings, and they were thronged with spectators. Three musicians of a regiment in the neighboring barracks, attracted, probably, by the peculiar charm of Methodist singing, were converted, and became active co-workers with Embury as Exhorters.[10] The lower classes of the people received the word gladly; the interest reached the Alms-house; Embury was invited to preach there, and the superintendent of the institution, and several of its inmates, were soon recorded among his converts. Thus American Methodism, like British Methodism, and primitive Christianity, of which it was a reproduction, began among the poor, and thus was foreshadowed its honorable mission throughout the continent and throughout the world. With Christ it could say, as the supreme proof of its genuineness as a dispensation of the truth, that "the poor have the Gospel preached unto them." Half a century ago a historian of Methodism, himself one of the noblest heroes of its history, remarked, "There are a few persons still living in New York who formerly met in the Rigging-loft, and are pleased at the recollection of what the Lord did for them in their little society, when they were weak and ignorant in the things of religion, but were united in

ginal authorities for my justification. See also Methodist Magazine, May, 1807, p. 45, London, and Irish Evangelist, Dec. 1, 1860, Dublin.

[10] Peter Park's MS. Account of the Rise of Methodism in America, found among the papers of Rev. Ezekiel Cooper; communicated to the author by Rev. Dr. I. T. Cooper.

Christian fellowship, and were willing to be despised for the sake of their Lord and Master."[11]

About February, 1767,[12] the little assembly at Embury's house were surprised, if not alarmed, by the appearance among them of a stranger in military costume, girt with his sword. He was an officer of the royal army. "All eyes were upon him; had he come to persecute them, to interrupt their religious services, or prohibit them from worshiping?"[13] He soon relieved their apprehensions by his devout participation in their devotions. When they sung he rose with them, when they prayed he knelt. At the conclusion of the service he introduced himself to the preacher and his leading brethren as Captain Thomas Webb, of the king's service, but also "a soldier of the cross, and a spiritual son of John Wesley. They were overjoyed, and hailed him as a 'brother beloved.'" He had been authorized by Wesley to preach; they offered him their humble desk, and thenceforward Captain Thomas Webb was to be one of the chief founders of American Methodism.

A very interesting character is this "good soldier of the Lord Jesus." "The brave are generous," says the old maxim. Thomas Webb's benignant face showed that he had both qualities. It presented the lineaments of a singularly tender, a fatherly heart, and there was no little "fire" and pathos in his elocution. He wore a shade over one of his eyes, a badge of his courage; for he had been at the siege of Louisburg, and had scaled with Wolfe the Heights of Abraham, and fought in the battle of Quebec, the most important military event, before the Revolution, in the history of the continent; for by it the

[11] Lee's History of the Methodists, p. 25. Baltimore, 1810.
[12] Letter of "T. T." to Wesley, Atmore, App., 580.
[13] Wakeley, chap. 4.

Papal domination of France was overthrown in the North, and the country, from Hudson's Bay to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific, placed under Protestant control, and opened for its great career in Christian civilization.

Captain Webb lost his right eye at Louisburg[14] and was wounded in his right arm at Quebec. About eight years after the battle of the Plains of Abraham he heard John Wesley preach in Bristol; he now became a decidedly religious man, and, in 1765, joined a Methodist society. Entering a Methodist congregation at Bath, which was disappointed by its circuit preacher, he advanced to the altar, in his regimentals, and addressed them with great effect, chiefly narrating his own Christian experience. Wesley, ever vigilant for "helpers," licensed him to preach, and through the remainder of his life he was indefatigable in Christian labors both in the New World and in the Old; preaching, giving his money, founding societies, and attending Conferences. Asbury characterized him as "an Israelite indeed." Wesley, who delighted in the disciplinary regularity, the obedience and courage of military men, not a few of whom entered his itinerant ranks, evidently loved the good captain. "He is a man of fire," wrote the great founder,

[14] Wes. Mag., 1849, p. 380.—"A ball hit him on the bone which guards the right eye, and taking an oblique direction, burst the eyeball, and passing through the palate into his mouth, he swallowed it. His only recollection was a flash of light, which accompanied the destruction of the eye. The wounded were put into a boat, and having crossed the water, all were assisted to land excepting Webb, of whom one of the men said, 'He needs no help; he is dead enough.' His senses had returned, and he was just able to reply, 'No, I am not dead.' Three months passed away before he could again attend to his military duties. May we not ask, Do the annals of surgery record a more wonderful escape? Had the ball struck him a hair's breadth higher or lower it would have taken his life! He had yet a great work to do for his heavenly Master, and for this he was preserved."

"and the power of God constantly accompanies his word." He heard Webb in the Old Foundry, London, and writes, "I admire the wisdom of God in still raising up various Preachers, according to the various tastes of men. The captain is all life and fire; therefore, although he is not deep or regular, yet many, who would not hear a better preacher, flock to hear him, and many are convinced under his preaching." He records, again, that he had "kindled a flame" in Bath, "and it has not yet gone out." "I found his preaching in the street in Winchester had been blessed greatly. Many were more or less convinced of sin, and several had found peace with God. I never saw the house before so crowded with serious and attentive hearers." The brave captain's word "in the street in Winchester" was to sound further than Wesley supposed when he made this entry in his journal. There were soldiers in the town, and Webb always drew such to his congregations; some of them were converted, and their regiment was afterward sent to the Norman Isles in the Channel. They wrote back for a Methodist Preacher; if one were sent who could speak both French and English they predicted that "the Gospel would shine over the islands." The sainted Robert Carr Brackenbury, "gentleman" and "Local Preacher," Alexander Killham, (founder of the "New Connection Methodists,") and, later, Adam Clarke, were sent, and Methodism was founded in the beautiful Channel Islands, where it has ever since flourished, and whence it sent forth at last the evangelists who have founded it in France.

For eleven or twelve years we catch glimpses of the military evangelist in the Journals of Wesley. The last of them is in 1785, when, being at Salisbury, where the captain had recently preached, he "endeavored to avail

himself of the fire which" that veteran "seldom fails to kindle." Fletcher of Madeley appreciated him, and tried hard with him to induce Benson, the commentator, to throw himself into the Methodistic movement in America. Fletcher himself, doubtless by the influence of Webb, had strong thoughts of doing so, but his health forbade it.

The allusions to Webb in the cotemporary publications of Methodism show that he was a man of profound piety. "He experienced much of the power of religion in his own soul," says an itinerant who usually lodged at his home in Bath. "He wrestled day and night with God for that degree of grace which he stood in need of that he might stand firm as the beaten anvil to the stroke, and he was favored with those communications from above which made him bold to declare the whole counsel of God. His evidence of the favor of God was so bright that he never lost a sense of that blessed truth, 'the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin.' For him to live was Christ, to die was gain."[15]

There must have been an eminent power of natural eloquence in the preaching of this zealous man. John Adams, the statesman of the American Revolution and President of the Republic, heard him with admiration, and describes him as "the old soldier—one of the most eloquent men I ever heard; he reaches the imagination and touches the passions very well, and expresses himself with great propriety." By another hearer he is spoken of as "a perfect Whitefield in declamation." His discourses were very effective, as has been remarked, with military men. They admired his noble mien and commanding voice. One of them, John Parsons, heard him in the open air at Salisbury, and has left us a brief representation of his manner. "With all that reverence,"

[15] Wes. Mag., 1835, p. 12.

says the account, "which he had been wont to pay to his superiors, he stood before the preacher, (whose piercing eye he thought scrutinized every individual present,) prepared to listen with deep attention." The service commenced by the singing of a hymn, with which, we are told, the military hearer was highly delighted; an earnest prayer was then offered up in behalf of the assembled multitude; and, another hymn having been sung, the preacher read his text from his pocket Bible, and addressed the people in an extemporaneous discourse of considerable length, during which "the admiration of Parsons was excited to the highest pitch by the earnestness of his manner and his powerful voice, which so wrought upon the military feelings of the soldier that he thought the word of command, by such an excellent officer, could distinctly be heard throughout the line, from right to left." The sermon being ended another hymn was sung, and a short prayer concluded the meeting. John Parsons's favorable opinion was won for the Methodists by this sermon. He afterward himself became a powerful Local Preacher, and, having done much good in various parts of England during forty-five years, he departed to the hosts above, in his seventieth year, shouting as he went, "When I get to glory I will make heaven ring with my voice, and wave my palm over the heads of the saints, crying, 'Victory! victory in the blood of the Lamb!'"[16]

A high Methodist authority, who knew the captain well, says, "They saw the warrior in his face, and heard the missionary in his voice. Under his holy eloquence they trembled, they wept, and fell down under his mighty word."[17]

[16] Dredge's Biog. Record, etc., p. 197. London, 1833.
[17] Rev. J. Sutcliffe, Wes. Mag., 1849, p. 386.

The native talent of Webb was sustained by considerable intelligence. He had seen much of human life, and had some knowledge of books. He read the Scriptures in the Greek language, and his Greek Testament is still a precious relic in America.[18]

One of Wesley's veterans, who was intimate with the captain, and who read the funeral service over his coffin, says, "Great multitudes crowded to hear him, and a vast number in different places owned him for their spiritual father. His ministry was plain, but remarkably powerful; he was truly a Boanerges, and often made the stout-hearted tremble."[19]

Such was the stranger in uniform, whose sudden appearance startled the little assembly of Embury's hearers. He had heard of them at Albany, where he had lived a short time before as Barrack-master, and where he had opened his house for religious services, conducted by himself. He had hastened to New York to encourage the struggling society. Following the custom of the times, he always wore his military dress in public. He preached in it, with his sword lying on the table or desk before him. The populace were attracted by the spectacle, and soon crowded the preaching room beyond its capacity. A rigging loft, sixty feet by eighteen, on William-street, was rented in 1767. Here Webb and Embury preached thrice a week to crowded assemblies. "It could not contain half the people who desired to hear the word of the Lord."

Webb saw the necessity of a chapel; but he was anticipated in the design by Barbara Heck, who was really

[18] He presented it to Rev. Wm. Duke, an early Methodist itinerant, who afterward became a Protestant Episcopal clergyman, and died in Elkton, Md., 1840. Mr. Duke gave it to Rev. J. B. Hagany. It is now in the library of Bishop Scott of the M. E. Church.

[19] Atmore's Memorial, p. 446, App.

the foundress of American Methodism. This "elect lady" had watched devoutly the whole progress of the infant society thus far. She was a woman of deep piety From the time that, "falling prostrate" before Embury, and "entreating him with tears to preach to them,"[20] she had recalled him to his duty by the solemn admonition, "God will require our blood at your hand," she seems to have anticipated, with the spirit of a prophetess, the great possible results of Methodism in the new world. Seeing the growth of the cause and the importance of a permanent temple, "she had made," she said, "the enterprise a matter of prayer; and looking to the Lord for direction, had received with inexpressible sweetness and power the answer, 'I the Lord will do it.'" In the fervor of her wishes and prayers, an economical plan for the edifice was devised in her mind. She considered it a suggestion from God. It was approved by the society, and the first structure of the denomination in the western hemisphere was a monumental image of the humble thought of this devoted woman. Webb entered heartily into the undertaking. It would probably not have been attempted without his aid. He subscribed thirty pounds toward it, the largest sum by one third given by any one person. He was one of its original trustees, Embury being first on the list—first trustee, first treasurer, first Class-leader, and first Preacher. They leased the site on John-street in 1768, and purchased it in 1770. They appealed successfully to the citizens of New York for assistance, and nearly two hundred and fifty names are still preserved on the subscription paper, including all classes, from the mayor down to African female servants, known

[20] Am. Meth. Mag., 1823, p. 384, attributed to Rev. Dr. P. P. Sandford. His "particulars are derived from an unquestionable source, even from living witnesses, who well remember the circumstances."—P. 427.

only by their Christian names, besides the primitive Methodists, Lupton, Sause, White, Heck, Jarvis, Newton, Sands, Staples, Brinkley, etc. The highest ranks of the New York social life of the times are honored on this humble memorial—the Livingstons, Duanes, Delanceys, Laights, Stuyvesants, Lispenards, and the clergy of the day, Auchmuty, Ogilvie, Inglis, and others.

The chapel was built of stone, faced with blue plaster. It was sixty feet in length, forty-two in breadth. Dissenters were not yet allowed to erect "regular churches" in the city; the new building was therefore provided with "a fireplace and chimney" to avoid "the difficulty of the law." Though long unfinished in its interior, it was "very neat and clean, and the floor was sprinkled over with sand as white as snow."[21] Embury, being a skillful carpenter, "wrought" diligently upon the structure. He constructed with his own hands its pulpit; and on the memorable 30th of October, 1768, mounted the desk he had made, and dedicated the humble temple by a sermon on Hosea x, 12: "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and reign righteousness upon you." The house was soon thronged. Within two years from its consecration we have reports of at least a thousand hearers crowding it and the area in its front. It was named Wesley Chapel, and was the first in the world that bore that title. Seven months after its dedication a letter to Wesley, concerning Embury and Webb, said, "The Lord carries on a very great work by these two men." The city at this time contained about twenty thousand inhabitants, the colonies but about three millions. Methodism

[21] See Wakeley for these and abundant similar particulars.

was thenceforward to grow alike with the growth of the city and of the continent.

Webb saw the importance of this its first material fortification in the colonies, and zealously endeavored to render it secure. His personal generosity was infectious. He could not admit the Christian character of an avaricious man. "Is his purse converted?" was his inquiry when hearing a report of the conversion of a capitalist. Besides his liberal donation, he lent the trustees three hundred pounds, and gave them the interest of the loan. He begged for them in Philadelphia at least thirty-two pounds. Like Wesley and his itinerants, he scattered religious books, and gave the profits for the debt of the church. Meanwhile he was practically an itinerant preacher. Being at last on the retired list, with the title and pay of a captain for his honorable services, he had leisure for travel. The kindred of his wife lived at Jamaica, L. I. He went thither, hired a house, and preached in it, and "twenty-four persons received justifying grace." He passed repeatedly through New Jersey, forming societies at Pemberton, Trenton, Burlington, and other places. While preaching in the market-place at Burlington in 1770, a young man in the throng, Joseph Toy,[22] was awakened. Webb soon after formed there a class, and appointed him its leader. He became one of the first teachers in the first college of Methodism, and died at last a veteran of the Itinerancy.

Captain Webb was the founder of Methodism in Philadelphia, where he first preached in a sail-loft, and formed a class of seven members in 1767 or 1768. He continued to preach in that city more or less till Wesley's itinerants arrived, and was there to welcome them in person in 1769. He aided in the purchase of the first

[22] Meth. Mag. (Am.) 1826, p. 438.

Methodist church of Philadelphia, St. George's, in 1770, contributing liberally for it. He introduced Methodism into Delaware in 1769,[23] preaching in Newcastle, Wilmington, and in the woods on the shores of the Brandywine. Still later he labored in Baltimore.

Having thus founded the new cause on Long Island, in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, and prominently helped to found it in New York, he appealed to British Methodism for aid, urging Wesley to send out preachers. In 1772 he returned to England, apparently to promote the interest of the Wesleyans for the colonies. We catch frequent glimpses of him in the cotemporary records, as going to and fro in the land, preaching in Dublin, in London, and other places. He made a spirited appeal for missionaries at the Conference in Leeds, and led back with him, to America, Shadford and Rankin; Pilmoor and Boardman having been previously sent in response to his urgent letters. Re-embarking with his two missionaries in 1773, he continued his travels and labors with unabated zeal till the breaking out of the Revolution, when he returned finally to Europe. To Embury unquestionably belongs chronological precedence, by a few months, as the founder of American Methodism, but to Webb belongs the honor of a more prominent agency in the great event; of more extensive and more effective services; of the outspread of the denomination into Long Island, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware; the erection of its first chapels, and the introduction of Wesleyan itinerants. Aside from the mere question of priority,[24] he must be considered the

[23] Lednum, p. 55.

[24] Webb arrived in New York only about four months after Embury began to preach. Compare letter of "T. T." (Thomas Taylor) to Wesley. Atmore, App., p. 580.

principal founder of the American Methodist Church. We shall still meet him, occasionally, in the course of our narrative, and take leave of him at last in a good old age, when we shall see him fall in death as heroically as he labored through life.

But let us return to Embury and his little flock in New York. He continued to minister faithfully in their chapel twice or thrice a week. "There were at first no stairs or breastwork to the galleries;" they were ascended by a rude ladder.[25] "Even the seats on the lower floor had no backs." The "singing was congregational; some one set the tune, the rest joined in, and they made melody to the Lord." There was no vestry nor class-room; "the classes met in private houses." A parsonage, adjacent to the chapel, was erected in 1770—a small house, furnished chiefly with articles given or lent by the people. It was to be the occasional home of Boardman and Pilmoor, of Shadford and Rankin, of Asbury and Coke, and their fellow itinerants; who, being mostly unmarried men, found it sufficiently convenient. Embury's ministerial services seem to have been mostly gratuitous. The early records of the society show only an occasional donation to him of clothing, or money for clothing, or for work as a carpenter upon the premises. Before he left the city the trustees presented him two pounds and five shillings for the purchase of a Concordance, as a memento of his pastoral connection with them. Wesley's first missionaries, Pilmoor and Boardman, arrived in the colonies in the autumn of 1769, and not long after the faithful carpenter retired from the city to Camden, a settlement in the town of Salem, Washington county, New York. Thither he was accompanied by Peter Switzer, Abraham Bininger, a Moravian, who had crossed the At-

[25] Wakeley's "Lost Chapters."

lantic to Georgia with Wesley in 1735, and others of his companions. He there continued to labor as a local preacher, and formed a society, chiefly of his own countrymen, at Ashgrove — the first Methodist class within the bounds of the Troy Conference, which in our day reports more than 25,000 communicants, and more than 200 traveling preachers. He was held in high estimation by his neighbors, and officiated among them not only as a preacher, but as a magistrate. While mowing in his field in 1775,[26] he injured himself so severely as to die suddenly, aged but forty-five years, "greatly beloved and much lamented," says Asbury. He was buried on the neighboring farm of his Palatine friend Peter Switzer. After reposing fifty-seven years in his solitary grave without a memorial, his remains were disinterred with solemn ceremonies, and borne by a large procession to the Ashgrove burial ground, where their resting-place is marked by a monument, recording that he "was the first to set in motion a train of measures which resulted in the founding of John-street Church, the cradle of American Methodism, and the introduction of a system which has beautified the earth with salvation, and increased the joys of heaven." Some of his family emigrated to Upper Canada, and, with the family of Barbara Heck, were among the founders of Methodism in that province.

Thus we end reluctantly the meager narrative of what knowledge remains respecting this humble but honored man, whose name will probably never be forgotten on earth "till the heavens be no more."

Barbara Heck lived and died a model of womanly piety—"a Christian of the highest order; she lived much in prayer, and had strong faith; and therefore God used

[26] The date is doubtful, see p. 53.

her for great good."[27] Some of her descendants have been conspicuous in the progress of Methodism.[28]

[27] Lednum, p. 35.

[28] The importance which Methodism has attained in America has led, within a few years, to no little bibliomania for early Methodist documents, and to the minutest research for local traditions and relics. In these researches an extraordinary perplexity has arisen respecting not only the fate of Barbara Heck and her posterity, but the very orthography of her name. It has heretofore been supposed that her name was Hick, that she died in New York, and was buried in Trinity churchyard, and that Paul Hick (one of the early trustees of John-street Church) was her son. On the contrary, it is claimed, with singularly plausible evidence, that "her name was not 'Hick,' but Heck," with which the Irish authorities agree, as also the original New York signatures of Paul Heck, (see Wakeley's Lost Chapters;)—that she with her husband and all her sons (John, Jacob, and Samuel) removed to Camden, N. Y., (the new home of Embury,) in 1770 or 1771, and thence to Canada as early as 1774; that in 1778 they were in Upper Canada, and resided in Augusta (where they were a part of the *first* Methodist class, under the leadership of Samuel Embury, son of Philip) till their deaths; Mr. H. dying in 1792, Mrs. H. in 1804; and that they lie side by side in the burying-ground of the "Old Blue Church in the front of Augusta;" that "the Paul Hick of New York was a nephew of the original Paul Heck (the husband of Barbara) and cousin of John, Jacob, and Samuel;" that the change of the name was made in his family, etc. (See ample documents on the subject in the Christian Guardian, Canada, May 25, 1859.) The question is biographical rather than historical, and I have therefore chosen not to introduce it into the text of my narrative. I may be allowed to say, however, that I am inclined to the Canadian side of the dispute. The family of Heeks have been numerous in the province, and active in its Methodism. They undoubtedly sprung from the original Palatine stock in New York city. The orthography of the name as used by them, as well as their whole explanation of the curious problem, are decidedly vindicated by authorities in Ireland, where these questions have been discussed with no little eagerness in the Irish Evangelist, the organ of Irish Methodism. There has been no better authority in Canadian Methodist history than the late Rev. William Case. He seems never to have doubted the residence of the Heck family, and of the descendants of Embury, in Upper Canada. From a private letter (now in my possession) addressed by him in 1855 to Rev. Dr. Nathan Bangs, (his fellow-laborer in Canada at the beginning of this century,) I extract the following passage, as not only bearing on this question, but as affording some interesting allusions to several names venerable in our early history: "During the winter just passing I have enjoyed the unspeakable pleasure of

visiting the scenes of our early labors, yours and mine. I passed through Hallowell, Belleville, Kingston, Elizabethtown, Brockville, Augusta, Matilda, and thence to Bytown, (Ottawa City;) thence to Perth and Wolford on the Rideau, then home through a portion of the northern new settlements. In this route I found some, though few, of our former religious friends now living. Arthur Youmans, Rufus Shorey, Mrs. M'Lean, (formerly Widow Coate,) and William Brown are yet living, at the ages of from eighty to ninety-one. Youmans (of the latter age) was one of the members of the first class formed in Hallowell, January, 1793, by Darius Dunham. A class paper of the same class was written by Elijah Wolsey in 1795. But the parents of the Johnsons, Congers, Van Deusens, Robins, Germans, Huffs, Emburys, Detlors, Clarkes, Parrots, Maddens, Keders, Colemans, Hecks, Coons, Brouses, Aults, Dulmages, Laurences, are all gone; yet they live in their example of piety, integrity, hospitality, and Christian benevolence. These virtues are prominent to a great extent in their numerous descendants. The progeny bears a striking impress of their worthy patriarchal fathers. You will remember the names of Samuel and Jacob Heck of Augusta, and the Emburys of Bay of Quinte—the former the sons of Paul Heck and his worthy companion, the parents of Methodism in the city of New York and in America. The parents are gone, and the sons have followed them in the way of holiness to glory; but a numerous train of grandchildren are pursuing the Christian course 'their fathers trod'—intelligent, pious, and wealthy. '*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*' A few years since I visited John Embury and his worthy companion. He was then ninety-eight years old. The scenes of early Methodism in New York were vivid in his recollection, and he referred to them as readily as if they had recently occurred. He said, 'My uncle, Philip Embury, was a great man—a powerful preacher—a very powerful preacher. I had heard many ministers before, but nothing reached my heart till I heard my Uncle Philip preach. I was then about sixteen. The Lord has since been my trust and portion. I am now ninety-eight. Yes, my Uncle Philip was a great preacher.' After this interview he lived about a year, and died suddenly, as he rose from prayer in his family, at the age of ninety-nine. The Emburys, Detlors, Millers, Maddens, Switzers, of Bay of Quinte, are numerous and pious, and some of them ministers of the Gospel, all firmly grounded in Methodism. Their Palatine origin is prominent in their health, integrity, and industry."—See *Life and Times of Bangs*, p. 386.

CHAPTER II.

RISE OF METHODISM IN MARYLAND.

Robert Strawbridge—Traces of him in Ireland—His Character—His Emigration to America—His Methodistic Labors—Richard Owen, the first native Methodist Preacher—Watters's Eulogy on him—Strawbridge's latter Years—His Death and Funeral—Asbury's Opinion of him—Original Humility of American Methodism.

The Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, giving a "brief account of the rise of Methodism" in their preface to the Discipline, in 1790, say, after alluding to the labors of Embury, that "about the same time Robert Strawbridge, a local Preacher from Ireland, settled in Frederick county, in the state of Maryland, and preaching there, formed some Societies." Robert Strawbridge was born at Drumsnagh, near the river Shannon, in the county of Leitrim, Ireland. An ardent Hibernian, his zeal for religion provoked "such a storm of persecution" among his neighbors as induced him, not long after his conversion, to escape their opposition by removing from his native place to the county of Sligo, where "his labors were signally blessed of God through a considerable district."[1] He labored also in the county of Cavan, where, for many years, aged Methodists delighted to talk of his zeal and humble but heroic preaching, and "highly prized his piety and gifts." They "recognized him as a man of more than ordinary usefulness. He was very ardent and evangelical in his spirit." He subsequently preached

[1] MS. letter of John Shillington, Esq., of Ireland, in the possession of the author

in the county of Armagh, residing mostly at Tanderagee. He "sounded the alarm" through all that populous rural district. Terryhugan, mentioned by Wesley as the "mother-church of these parts," was "a place to which he often resorted, and among its lively Methodists, warm in their religious affections, he found many a heart that beat in unison with his own." His name remained embalmed in the memories of the latest Methodists of that generation in Terryhugan. One of their devoted young women became his wife, and emigrated with him to America, according to some accounts, in 1760, according to others in 1764 or 1765.[2]

Strawbridge, being an Irishman by nativity and education, if not by blood, had the characteristic traits of his countrymen: he was generous, energetic, fiery, versatile, somewhat intractable to authority, and probably improvident. In his various migrations he never bettered his temporal fortunes, but he never lost the warmth or buoyancy of his religious spirit. He came to America to secure a more competent livelihood—"which object, however, he never accomplished"[3]—and plunged at once,

[2] Ibid. Mr. Shillington, the best Irish authority in the Methodist history and antiquities of his country, says, "not earlier than 1764, not later than 1765." The Rev. Dr. Hamilton (Meth. Quart. Rev., 1856, p. 435) supposed he had sufficient proof of the arrival of Strawbridge in America in the year of Embury's emigration, (1760,) but on examining Mr. Shillington's letter writes me, "that, after all, Mr. S. may be right, and, as he is still going on with his investigations, the difference will soon, it is to be hoped, be finally settled." Dr. Roberts argues for the earlier date, and also for the claim of Strawbridge to priority as founder of American Methodism, Dr. Hamilton agreeing with him in the latter opinion. Lednum (chap. 1) follows the authority of Hamilton and Roberts. For the other side of the question see Wakeley, chaps. 17, 18, 19. The impartial student of early Methodist history will find it expedient to waive the decision of the question till further researches shall afford him more data. I shall hold my text subject to any revision which such researches may hereafter justify.

[3] Hamilton.

with his young wife, into the "backwoods;" for Frederick county, where he settled on "Sam's Creek," had but recently been reclaimed from the perils of savage invasion. He opened his house for preaching; formed in it a Methodist Society; and, not long after, built the "Log Meeting-house" on Sam's Creek, about a mile from his home.[4] He buried beneath its pulpit two of his children. It was a rude structure, twenty-two feet square, and, though long occupied, was never finished, but remained without windows, door, or floor. "The logs were sawed on one side for a doorway, and holes were made on the other three sides for windows."

He became virtually an itinerant, journeying to and fro in not only his own large county, (then comprehending three later counties,) but in Eastern Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Virginia; preaching with an ardor and a fluency which surprised his hearers, and drew them in multitudes to his rustic assemblies. He seemed disposed literally to let the morrow, if not, indeed, the day, take care of itself. "During his life he was poor, and the family were often straitened for food; but he was a man of strong faith, and would say to them on leaving, 'Meat will be sent here to-day.'" His frequent calls to preach in distant parts of the country required so much of his time that his family were likely to suffer in his absence, so that it became a question with him "who will keep the wolf from my own door while I am abroad seeking after the lost sheep?" His neighbors, appreciating his generous zeal and self-sacrifice, agreed to take care of his little farm, gratuitously, in his absence.

The Sam's Creek Society, consisting at first of but twelve or fifteen persons, was a fountain of good influence to the

[4] Not Pipe Creek, as usually stated.—William Fort, in Christ. Advocate, 1844.

county and the state. It early gave four or five Preachers to the Itinerancy. Strawbridge founded Methodism in Baltimore and Harford counties. The first Society in the former was formed by him at the house of Daniel Evans, near the city, and the first chapel of the county was erected by it.[5] The first native Methodist Preacher of the continent, Richard Owen, was one of his converts in this county; a man who labored faithfully and successfully as a Local Preacher for some years, and who entered the itinerancy at last, and died in it.[6] He was long the most effective co-laborer of Strawbridge, traveling the country in all directions, founding Societies and opening the way for the coming itinerants. The first of the latter raised up in the colonies has recorded his simple but warm-hearted eulogy; giving nearly the only information we have of the man who must bear forever the peculiar pre-eminence of being the first native standard-bearer of the Methodistic movement in the Western hemisphere. "On my way home," writes William Watters, "I saw my old friend and fellow-laborer, Richard Owen, in Leesburg, dangerously ill, and it proved the last time of my seeing him, for in a few days he resigned his soul into the hands of his merciful God. He was the first American Methodist Preacher, though for many years he acted only as a Local Preacher. He was awakened under the preaching of Robert Strawbridge. He was a man of a respectable family, of good natural parts, and of considerable utterance. Though encumbered with a family, he often left wife and children, and a comfortable living, and went into many distant parts, before we had any Traveling Preachers among us, and without fee or reward

[5] Gatch's Memoir, by Judge M'Lean, p. 24. Cincinnati, 1854.

[6] Life of Watters, p. 108. Alexandria, 1806. Watters himself was the first native Itinerant, but not the first native Preacher.

freely published that Gospel to others which he had happily found to be the power of God unto his own salvation. After we had regular Circuit Preachers among us, he, as a Local Preacher, was ever ready to fill up a gap, and, by his continuing to go into neighborhoods where there was no preaching, he was often the means of opening the way for enlarging old or forming new circuits. Several years before his dissolution, after his children were grown up and able to attend to his family concerns, he gave himself entirely to the work of the ministry, and finished his course in Leesburg, Fairfax circuit, in the midst of many kind friends, but at some distance from his home. As his last labors were in the circuit where I lived, I had frequent opportunities of being in his company, both in public and in private, and had every reason to believe that he had kept himself unspotted from the world, and had the salvation of souls much at heart. I wish it was in my power to hold him up in his real character, as an example to our present race of Local Preachers. He was plain in his dress, plain in his manners, industrious and frugal; he bore a good part of the burden and heat of the day in the beginning of that work which has since so gloriously spread over this happy continent, and was as anxious to be a general blessing to mankind as too many now are to get richer and make a show in the world. I shall need to make no apology for giving this short account of so worthy a man to any who knew him."

Owen's temperament was congenial with that of Strawbridge. He clung to the hearty Irishman with tenacious affection, emulated his missionary activity, and at last followed him to the grave, preaching his funeral sermon to a "vast concourse," under a large walnut tree. "Richard Owen, the first Methodist Preacher raised up

in America," says our best chronicler of these dim, early times, "was a Local Preacher in Baltimore Circuit. Although his name was printed in the Minutes, it is not said that he was received into the traveling connection until 1785. At the time of his death he had been preaching fifteen or sixteen years. Though he had charge of a large family, he traveled and preached much as a Local Preacher, in what was then the back settlements, when Methodism was in its infancy. He was a man of sound heart, plain address, good utterance, and solid judgment; and for the last two years of his life he gave himself up wholly to the work of saving souls."[7]

Several Preachers were rapidly raised up by Strawbridge in his travels in Baltimore and Harford counties: Sater Stephenson, Nathan Perigo, Richard Webster, and others; and many laymen, whose families have been identified with the whole subsequent progress of Methodism in their respective localities,[8] if not in the nation generally. We have frequent intimations of Strawbridge's labors and success in the early biographies of Methodism, but they are too vague to admit of any consecutive narration of his useful career. We discover him now penetrating into Pennsylvania,[9] and then arousing the population of the Eastern shore of Maryland; now bearing the standard into Baltimore, and then, with Owen, planting it successfully in Georgetown, on the Potomac, and in other places in Fairfax county, Virginia; and by the time that the regular itinerancy comes effectively into

[7] Lednum.

[8] Thomas Bond, of Harford county, was one of his converts. His sons, Rev. John Wesley Bond (the traveling companion of Bishop Asbury) and Dr. Thomas E. Bond, as also his grandsons, have been prominent in the Methodist community.

[9] The venerable Henry Bœhm, (one of Asbary's traveling companions,) heard him preach at his father's house in Lancaster county, about 1779.

operation in Maryland, a band of Preachers, headed by such men as Watters, Gatch, Bowham, Haggerty, Durbin, Garrettson, seem to have been prepared, directly or indirectly through his instrumentality, for the more methodical prosecution of the great cause. At last we find his own name in the Minutes (in 1773 and 1775) as an itinerant. But it disappears unaccountably. It is probable that his Irish spirit could not brook the stern authority of Asbury and his British associates, especially the requirement which they and their party so stoutly enforced, that the administration of the sacraments by Methodist Preachers should be suspended. The Revolution, as we shall hereafter see, not only dissolved the English State Church in America, but drove out of the country most of the Anglican clergy; the Methodists who had resorted to their churches for the sacraments were therefore left without these means of grace. For months, and even years, many societies were destitute of them. A considerable party of the Preachers undertook to supply them, and a schism was imminent in the denomination. The Conference of 1773, unable to deter Strawbridge from a course which seemed to him justified by the clearest expediency, if not by moral necessity, allowed him to persist if he would do so under the direction of Rankin, Wesley's "Assistant," and practically the "Superintendent" of the Church; but Strawbridge declined this restriction. He seems to have become settled as Preacher to the Sam's Creek and Brush Forest Societies; the latter being in Harford county, and its chapel the second built in Maryland. We trace him at last to the upper part of Long Green, Baltimore county, where an opulent and generous public citizen,[10] who admired his character and sympathized with his poverty, gave him a farm, free of rent,

[10] Captain Charles Ridgely.

for life. It was while residing here, "under the shadow of Hampton," his benefactor's mansion, that, in "one of his visiting rounds to his spiritual children, he was taken sick at the house of Joseph Wheeler, and died in great peace;" probably in the summer of 1781. Owen, as has been remarked, preached his funeral sermon in the open air, to a great throng, "under a tree at the north-west corner of the house." Among the concourse were a number of his old Christian neighbors, worshipers in the "Log Chapel," to whom he had been a Pastor in the wilderness; they bore him to the tomb, singing as they marched one of those rapturous lyrics with which Charles Wesley taught the primitive Methodists to triumph over the grave. He sleeps in an orchard of the friend at whose house he died—one of his own converts—under a tree, from the foot of which can be seen the great city which claims him as its Methodistic apostle, and which, ever since his day, has been pre-eminent among American communities for its Methodistic strength and zeal.[11]

The scattered allusions to Strawbridge in our early records are nearly all favorable to his Christian character, his apostolic zeal, his tireless labors, his self-sacrifice, his hearty Irish fervor. He was of "medium size, of dark complexion, black hair, had a sweet voice, and was an excellent singer." Garrettson describes him as a good converser. "Mr. Strawbridge," remarks that Methodist veteran, "came to the house of a gentleman, near where I lived, to stay all night; I had never heard him preach, but as I had a great desire to be in company with a person who had caused so much talk in the country, I went

[11] Dr. Hamilton in the Meth. Quart. Rev., 1856. Lednum also gives nearly all our scanty knowledge of Strawbridge. "Rise of Meth. in America," chap. 1.

over and sat and heard him converse till nearly midnight, and when I retired it was with these thoughts: I have never spent a few hours more agreeably in my life. He spent most of the time in explaining Scripture and in giving interesting anecdotes."[12]

Asbury's prejudice against Strawbridge, for his Hibernian independence, in the sacramental controversy, continued to the last. "He is no more," wrote the great but rigorous bishop, "he is no more; upon the whole I am inclined to think the Lord took him away in judgment because he was in a way to do hurt to his cause, and that he saved him in mercy because from his death-bed conversation he appears to have had hope in his end."[13] Owen, who knew him better, and loved him as a son, had no such equivocal opinion of his end. He proclaimed, as his text, over the coffin of the devoted though headstrong evangelist, "I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them."

[12] "Perhaps one of them," adds Garrettson, "would do to relate here: 'A congregation came together at a certain place, and a gentleman who was hearing thought the Preacher had directed his whole sermon to him, and retired home after the service in disgust. However, he concluded he would hear him once more, and hid himself behind the people, so that the Preacher should not see him. It was the old story: his character was delineated. The Preacher happened to take his text from Isaiah, 'And a man shall be as a hiding-place,' etc. In the midst of the sermon he cried out, 'Sinner, come from your scouting-hole!' The poor fellow came forward, looked the Preacher in the face, and said, 'You are a wizard, and the devil is in you: I will hear you no more!'"—*Bangs's Life of Garrettson*, p. 28. New York, 1839.

[13] Journals, Sept. 3, 1781. A local reference in this entry shows that it relates to Strawbridge. Asbury's great military soul could pardon almost any offense but insubordination to authority. Not only Strawbridge's persistence in the administration of the sacraments, but his continued charge of the Sam's Creek and Brush Forest congregations, displeased the Bishop.

Thus did Methodism begin simultaneously, or nearly so, in the north and in the middle of the opening continent. Its first two chapels were befittingly humble; their very humbleness being not only an adaptation to its peculiar mission among the poor, but giving, by contrast with the grandeur of its still advancing results, a peculiar moral sublimity, a divine attestation to the great cause of which they were the first monuments. Each was in its lowly sphere an evangelical Pharos, shedding out a pure though modest light, the rays of which extended, blended, and brightened, till they streamed, a divine illumination, over the whole heavens of the nation, and fell in scattered radiance, like the light of the morning, on many of the ends of the earth. And, judging from the present prospect, he may not be an extravagant prophet who should venture to predict that "Wesley Chapel" of New York, and the "Log Chapel" of Maryland, shall yet assume a purer and a sublimer glory in Christian history than the splendid structures of St. Paul, St. Peter, and St. Sophia. For still is it true, and will be to the end, that "God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."

CHAPTER III.

EARLY LAY EVANGELISTS.

Immigration — The Methodists of New York apply to Wesley for Preachers — Interest in England for America — Robert Williams hastens to the Colonies — Ashton of Ashgrove — Williams's Services — He founds Methodism in Virginia — Jarrett — Jesse Lee — William Watters, the first Native Itinerant — Williams's Death — Asbury's Eulogy on him — Other Testimonials to his Character and Usefulness — John King — He preaches in the Potter's Field of Philadelphia — He introduces Methodism into Baltimore — Preaches in the Streets — Traces of his Life — His Faults — Wesley's characteristic Letter to him: Note.

The introduction of Methodism into America, demanded by the great movement of transatlantic immigration, was itself an incident of that movement. The new and urgent necessity thus evolved a moral provision for itself. Embury and the Palatines, Strawbridge, and scores, probably hundreds of other Methodists, individually scattered through the colonies, had been floated, as it were, by the insetting current to the shores of the New World, and soon became the centers of religious societies among its Atlantic communities. Borne along by the irresistible stream, apparently submerged at times in its tumultuous course, many of them reappeared in the remote interior settlements and became the germs of early Methodist Churches in the desert. The Emburys, the Hecks, and some of their associates, bore Methodism not only to Northern New York, but at last to Upper Canada, years before any regular itinerants penetrated that province. The Preachers and laymen of Maryland bore it across the Alleghanies, and scattered the precious seed over the valleys of the Ohio and the Mississippi.

The little society in New York, worshiping in their unfinished temple, without a choir, without backs to their seats, and climbing a rude ladder to their galleries, seemed instinctively conscious of their great coming history. Letters were sent by them to England calling for missionary pastors. Thomas Taylor, one of their original Church officers,[1] wrote to Wesley in their name as early as 1768, "We want," he said, "an able and experienced Preacher, one who has both gifts and graces necessary for the work. With respect to money for the payment of the Preacher's passage over, if they cannot procure it we will sell our coats and shirts to procure it for them. Great numbers of serious persons come to hear God's word as for their lives; and their numbers have so increased that our house," still the Rigging-loft, "for these six weeks past could not contain half the people." They were now planning for the erection of Wesley Chapel, and spent "two several days of fasting and prayer for the direction of God, and his blessing on their proceedings." Send us a Preacher, they cry to Wesley, "for the good of thousands send one at once," "one whose heart and soul are in the work;" and they predict "that such a flame should be soon kindled as would never stop until it reached the great South Sea." Even Wesley's faith might have been startled at the geographical reach of the sanguine prophecy; but it has long since been fulfilled. American Methodism has planted its standard in the Sandwich Islands, and if it has not borne it thence to Polynesia it is because British Methodism had taken possession of the "great South Sea," and raised among its cannibal populations the purest Churches now to be

[1] Meth. Mag., (Am.,) 1823, p. 427. The letter is signed "T. T." See the lease of the grounds of John-street Church (Wakeley, chap. 6) for the identification of the name.

found on the earth, with native chieftains and kings in their ministry.

These and other appeals could not fail of effect in England. The rapid progress of Methodism there had impressed most minds, in its own communion, with a vague but glowing anticipation of general if not universal triumphs. Perronet, the venerable vicar of Shoreham, the friend and counselor of Wesley, betook himself to the study of the prophecies, assured that great events were at hand. "I make no doubt," he wrote, "that Methodism is designed to introduce the millennium." The news of the dawn of their cause in the New World spread among the people before the Annual Conference was called upon to recognize and provide for it; and before the itinerant missionaries could be dispatched across the Atlantic, humbler men, imbued with the enthusiasm of the new movement, were ready to throw themselves upon the hazards of the distant field, that they might share in its first combats. One of these, Robert Williams, applied to Wesley for authority to preach there; permission was given him on condition that he should labor in subordination to the missionaries who were about to be sent out. Williams's impatient zeal could not wait for the missionaries; he appealed to his friend Ashton, who afterward became an important member of Embury's society. Ashton was induced to emigrate by the promise of Williams to accompany him. Williams was poor, but hearing that his friend was ready to embark he hastened to the port, sold his horse to pay his debts, and, carrying his saddle-bags on his arm, set off for the ship with a loaf of bread, a bottle of milk, but no money for his passage.[2] Ashton "paid the expense of his voyage, and they landed in New York [1769] before

[2] Lee, p. 27.

the missionaries arrived.[3]" Ashton took an active interest in the welfare of Embury's little charge, and removed with him at last to Ashgrove, (named after himself,) in Camden, N. Y., where he was the first member and chief pillar of the "Ashgrove Methodist Society,"[4] his house being later the home of the itinerants. He left a legacy of three acres of land for a parsonage, and an annuity to the end of time for the oldest unmarried member of the New York Conference, the payment of which still reminds the Preachers annually of his eccentric Irish liberality.

Williams immediately began his mission in Embury's Chapel, and thenceforward, for about six years, was one of the most effective pioneers of American Methodism—"the first Methodist minister in America that published a book, the first that married, the first that located, and the first that died."[5] We have but little knowledge of his career, but sufficient to show that he had the fire and heroism of the original itinerancy. He was stationed at John-street Church some time in 1771. He labored successfully with Strawbridge in founding the new cause in Baltimore county. In the first published Conference Minutes he is appointed to Petersburg, Va. "He was the apostle of Methodism in Virginia." He followed Strawbridge in founding it in 1772 on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. In the same year he appeared in Norfolk, Va. Taking his stand on the steps of the Court-house, he collected a congregation by singing a hymn, and then preached with a plainness and energy so novel among them that they supposed he was insane. No one invited him home, in a community noted for hos-

[3] Two months at least. Lednum, chap. 8.
[4] Wakeley's "Heroes of Methodism," p. 169. New York, 1857.
[5] Wakeley's Lost Chapters, p. 20.

pitality; they were afraid of his supposed lunacy: but on hearing him a second time their opinion was changed. He was received to their houses, and soon after a Society was formed in the city, the germ of the denomination in the state. In 1773 he traveled in various parts of Virginia. Jarrett, an apostolic churchman, and afterward a notable friend of the Methodists, encouraged his labors, and entertained him a week at his parsonage. Jarrett wrote, later, an account of "the work of God in these parts"—Sussex and Brunswick counties—and says: "It was chiefly carried on by the Methodists. The first of them who appeared there was Robert Williams, who was a plain, artless, indefatigable preacher of the Gospel. He was greatly blessed in detecting the hypocrite, razing false foundations, and stirring believers up to press after a present salvation from the remains of sin. He came to my house in the month of March, in the year 1773. The next year others of his brethren came, who gathered many Societies both in this neighborhood and in other places as far as North Carolina. They now began to ride the circuit, and to take care of the Societies already formed, which were rendered a happy means both of deepening and spreading the work of God."[6]

Williams formed the first circuit of Virginia. A signal example of his usefulness (incalculable in its results) was the conversion of Jesse Lee. He was "the spiritual father" of this heroic itinerant, the founder of Methodism in New England. "Mr. Lee's parents opened their doors for him to preach. They were converted. Two of their sons became Methodist ministers, and their other children shared largely in the blessings of the Gospel, which he proclaimed with such flaming zeal, holy ardor, and great success."[7] The religious interest ex-

[6] See Asbury's Journals, anno 1776. [7] Wakeley's Heroes, p. 174.

cited by Williams's labors soon extended into North Carolina, and opened the way for the southward advancement of Methodism. He bore back to Philadelphia, says Asbury, a "flaming account of the work in Virginia—many of the people were ripe for the Gospel and ready to receive us." He returned, taking with him a young man named William Watters, who was thus ushered into the ministry, and has ever since been honored as the first native American itinerant. Leaving him in the field already opened, Williams went himself south-westward, "as Providence opened the way." Subsequently he bore the cross into North Carolina. He formed a six weeks' circuit from Petersburg southward over the Roanoke River some distance into that state, and thus became the "apostle of Methodism" in North Carolina, as well as Virginia. Like most of the itinerants of that day, he located after his marriage, and settled between Norfolk and Suffolk, where, and in all the surrounding regions, he continued to preach till his death, which occurred on the 26th of September, 1775. Asbury was now in the country, and at hand to bury the zealous pioneer. He preached his funeral sermon, and records in his Journal the highest possible eulogy on him. "He has been a very useful, laborious man. The Lord gave many seals to his ministry. Perhaps no one in America has been an instrument of awakening so many souls as God has awakened by him."[8] "He was a plain, pointed preacher, indefatigable in his labors," says a historian of the Church.[9] "That pious servant of the Lord," says Watters, his young fellow-traveler in the South. "The name of Robert Williams," says our earliest annalist,[10] "still lives in the minds of many of his spiritual

[8] Asbury's Journals, anno 1775.
[9] Bangs, anno 1773.
[10] Lee, p. 43.

children. He proved the goodness of his doctrine by his tears in public and by his life in private. He spared no pains in order to do good — standing on a stump, block, or log, he sung, prayed, and preached to hundreds" as they passed along from their public resorts or churches. "It was common with him after preaching to ask most of the people whom he spoke to some question about the welfare of their souls, and to encourage them to serve God." He printed and circulated Wesley's Sermons, "spreading them through the country, to the great advantage of religion—they opened the way in many places for our preachers, where these had never been before. Though dead, he yet speaketh by his faithful preaching and holy walk."

Such are the scanty intimations that remain of the evangelist who was the first practically to respond to the appeals from America to England. His grave is unknown, but he will live in the history of the Church forever, associated with Embury, Webb, and Strawbridge. He did for it in Virginia and North Carolina what Embury did for it in New York, Webb in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware, and Strawbridge in Maryland.

Another humble English Methodist appeared on the scene a few months after Williams's arrival, and though he was anticipated some few weeks by Wesley's first missionaries, yet by coincidence of time, as well as of character and career, his name may be appropriately placed with that of Williams before we turn to the regular itinerants for the more historic scope of our narrative. John King's name will never die in the records of the Church in the Middle States. He came from London to America in the latter part of 1769, whether attracted hither by the claims of the new Church or not is now not ascertainable. His enthusiastic sympathy

with the pioneer Methodists led him, however, to throw himself immediately into their ranks, persisting even against severe discouragements. He first appears in Philadelphia, inspired with what he deemed an inward call to preach the Gospel, and burdened with the apostolic sense of the "woe" that would be to him if he did not preach it. He offered himself to the Church for license, but it hesitated. "However," says its historian, "this young man determined to preach," and made an appointment "in the Potter's Field."[11] He accordingly proclaimed humbly but courageously his first message in that humblest of sanctuaries, over the graves of the poor, and thus began a career of eminent usefulness. Some of his Methodist brethren heard him, and urged his authorization by the Society as a preacher. He was permitted to deliver a "trial sermon" before them, was licensed, and next appears in Wilmington, Del., "among a few people who were there earnestly seeking the Lord." Thence we trace him into Maryland, where Strawbridge greets him with hearty welcome, and they work zealously together in Baltimore county, Robert Williams sharing their toils and sufferings. King was a man of invincible zeal. His manners were imbued with his piety, and preached it. On his first visit to Harford county in 1769, before he began the services, in a large congregation, he stood some time in silent prayer, covering his face with his hands. The spectacle struck the attention of a young man with such effect that he was awakened, and was soon after converted under the ministry of the stranger, and lived and died a devoted Methodist.[12] When in 1770 King preached

[11] Lee, anno 1769. The Old Potter's Field is now Washington Square.

[12] His name, well known in that region, was Henry Bowman. Lednum, chap. 9.

at the Forks of Gunpowder in Baltimore county, James J. Baker, a historic name in the Church of that region, was "awakened under his powerful word," and three days afterward was converted. He immediately became a Methodist, and his influence soon led to the organization of a class in his own dwelling, of which he was leader. His house became a home and preaching place for the evangelists. A church was built in 1773 on his estate, the third Methodist chapel in Maryland. His descendants have ever since been among the representative Methodists of the Middle States. One of his sons, James Baker, deputy surveyor of Baltimore, was the first-fruit of King's ministry in that city; for "it was the indomitable and enterprising King who first threw the banners of Methodism to the people of Baltimore."[13] His first pulpit there was a blacksmith's block at the intersection of Front and French streets. His next sermon was from a table at the junction of Baltimore and Calvert streets; his courage was tested on this occasion, for it was the militia training-day, and the drunken crowd charged upon him so effectually as to upset the table and lay him prostrate on the earth. He knew, however, that the noblest preachers of Methodism had suffered like trials in England, and he maintained his ground courageously. The commander of the troops, an Englishman, recognized him as a fellow-countryman, and defending him, restored order, and allowed him to proceed. Victorious over the mob, he made so favorable an impression as to be invited to preach in the English Church of St. Paul's, but improved that opportunity with such fervor as to receive no repetition of the courtesy. Methodism had now, however, entered Baltimore, down to our day its chief citadel in the new

[13] Lednum, chap. 9.

world. In five years after King stood there on the blacksmith's block, it was strong enough to entertain the Annual Conference of the denomination.

King was afterward received into the regular itinerancy. He was a member of the first Conference of 1773, and was appointed with Watters to New Jersey.[14] He soon after entered Virginia, and with two other preachers traveled Robert Williams's new six weeks' circuit, extending from Petersburg into North Carolina. "They were blessed among the people, and a most remarkable revival of religion prevailed in most of the circuit," says the cotemporary historian of the Church; "Christians were united and devoted to God; sinners were greatly alarmed; the Preachers had large congregations; indeed, the Lord wrought wonders among us that year."[15] Still later we trace him again to New Jersey; he located during the Revolution, but in 1801 reappeared in the itinerant ranks in Virginia. He located finally in 1803.[16] One of our historical authorities assures us that "he was a truly pious, zealous, and useful man, and so continued till his death, which occurred a few years since, at a very advanced age, in the vicinity of Raleigh, N. C. He was probably the only survivor, at the time of his decease, of all the Preachers of ante-revolutionary date."[17]

John King did valiant service in our early struggles. He seems, however, to have been often led away by his excessive ardor; he used his stentorian voice to its utmost capacity, and it is said that when he preached in St.

[14] Watters did not go; he went to Virginia. Gatch and King went to New Jersey. The latter stayed but a short time. Gatch's Life, p. 28.

[15] Lee, anno 1774.

[16] Atkinson's "Methodism in New Jersey," p. 72. Philadeldhia, 1860.

[17] Rev. Dr. Coggeshall, Methodist Quarterly Review, 1855, p. 501.

Paul's, Baltimore, he "made the dust fly from the old velvet cushion." Wesley, who probably knew him in England, and corresponded with him in America, calls him "stubborn and headstrong."[18]

Such were the first lay evangelists, the founders of Methodism in America, Embury, Webb, Strawbridge, Owen, Williams, and King. In the year in which the last two arrived, Wesley responded to the appeal of the New York society, and his first two regular itinerants appeared in the New World. Let us now turn to them.

[18] One of Wesley's letters to him is so characteristic, and conveys, withal, so good a lesson, that I am tempted to cite it: "My dear brother, always take advice or reproof as a favor; it is the surest mark of love. I advised you once and you took it as an affront; nevertheless I will do it once more. Scream no more at the peril of your soul. God now warns you by me, whom he has set over you. Speak as earnestly as you can, but do not scream. Speak with all your heart, but with a moderate voice. It was said of our Lord, 'He shall not *cry*:' the word properly means, He shall not *scream*. Herein be a follower of me, as I am of Christ. I often speak loud, often vehemently; but I never scream. I never strain myself; I dare not; I know it would be a sin against God and my own soul. Perhaps one reason why that good man, Thomas Walsh, yea, and John Manners too, were in such grievous darkness before they died, was because they shortened their own lives. O, John, pray for an advisable and teachable temper. By nature you are very far from it; you are stubborn and headstrong. Your last letter was written in a very wrong spirit. If you cannot take advice from others, surely you might take it from your affectionate brother," etc.

CHAPTER IV.

WESLEY'S FIRST MISSIONARIES TO AMERICA.

Appeals to Wesley for Missionaries — Dr. Wrangle — John Hood and Lambert Wilmer of Philadelphia — Wesley's Appeal in his Conference — The Response — A liberal Contribution for America — The Conference — Leeds in Methodist Missionary History — Sketch of Richard Boardman — His Perils by Water — Instrumental in the Conversion of Jabez Bunting — Joseph Pilmoor — A tempestuous Voyage — Arrival of the Missionaries in America — Pilmoor preaching in the Streets of Philadelphia — His Letter to Wesley — Boardman on the Way to New York — Whitefield greets them — Presentiment of his Death — His last Evangelical Triumphs — Last Sermon — Last Exhortation — Jesse Lee at his Tomb: Note — Boardman in New York — His Success — John Mann — Pilmoor — His Letter to Wesley — Singular Introduction into New Rochelle.

SEND us "an able and experienced Preacher," wrote the New York Society to Wesley; "we importune your assistance;" "send us a man of wisdom, of sound faith, a good disciplinarian, whose soul and heart are in the work;" and, as we have seen, they call unto him with the glowing vision of "a flame kindled, which shall never stop until it reaches the great South Sea." Webb wrote; Embury, it is said, wrote; Thomas Bell, a humble mechanic, who had "wrought six days" upon their new Chapel, wrote. Dr. Wrangle, a good Swedish missionary, afterward chaplain to his king, sent out by his government to minister to its emigrants in Philadelphia, appealed to Wesley in person at a dinner table, on his way home through England.[1] The zealous and catholic doctor had been preparing the way for Methodism in Philadelphia. John Hood had been converted under

[1] Wesley's Journals, October, 1768.

his ministry there; and the missionary had recommended him to the friendship of Lambert Wilmer, a devoted young man of St. Paul's Church. The two youths became like David and Jonathan, and after years of Christian co-operation they mutually requested that they might rest in the same grave. Their Swedish friend, obtaining from Wesley the promise of a preacher, wrote back to them the good news, and advised them to become Methodists. They accordingly became founders of the new Church in Philadelphia, where their names are still venerated, and where they now sleep in one tomb under the Union Methodist Church.[3]

In Wesley's "Minutes of Conference" for 1769 are nine brief lines pregnant with volumes of history. On the 3d of August, in the Conference at Leeds, he said from the chair, "We have a pressing call from our brethren of New York (who have built a preaching house) to come over and help them. Who is willing to go? Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmoor. What can we do further in token of our brotherly love? Let us now take a collection among ourselves. This was immediately done, and out of it £50 were allotted toward the payment of their debt, and about £20 given to our brethren for their passage." This was Wesley's twenty-sixth Conference; about a quarter of a century had passed since the organization of that humble ecclesiastical synod, in our day one of the most notable in the Protestant world. Its "Circuits" were but forty-six, the membership of its Churches less than twenty-nine thousand; the preachers present at the session were probably but few; and they were nearly all poor, if not suffering from want. More than two thirds of the ministry remained unmarried, unable to provide for families. The

[3] Lednum, chap. 4.

generous sum of three hundred and fifty dollars, given by them, was an extraordinary expression of their zeal and hopefulness for the new development of their cause now taking place beyond the Atlantic. Their own Conference debt was, at this session, between twenty-five and thirty thousand dollars; and the contribution for America was made immediately after the question and answer, "What is reserved for contingent expenses? Nothing." The gift of two of their prominent men was, however, a still stronger proof of their large expectations of Methodism in the new world. Their work at home was urgent; it had already extended over England, into Scotland, Wales, Ireland. The harvest was great, the laborers few; but they could not disregard this new sign in the western heavens; it was to them the Macedonian vision, shining over the distant sea. They sent therefore both men and money. It was characteristically befitting such self-sacrificing men to retire from their Conference declaring, as they did in a document, their resolution "to devote ourselves entirely to God; denying ourselves, taking up our cross daily, steadily aiming at one thing, to save our own souls and them that hear us."[3] And it is an interesting, if not a more significant coincidence, that in this very town whence the first Wesleyan missionaries were sent to America, was to be organized, less than half a century later, the first Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society, an institution which has transcended, in success, every other similar organization of Protestant Christendom.

A voyage to America was, at that time, a much more serious adventure than it is in our day; and for two obscure Methodist Preachers to tear themselves from their brethren, and throw themselves upon the contingen-

[3] Minutes, vol. i, p. 88. London, 1812.

cies of the feeble beginnings of their cause in the distant new world required no little courage, not to say daring. We cannot be surprised therefore that there was some hesitancy in the Conference. It is usually supposed that when Wesley's appeal was made the response was immediate; but it was otherwise. The Conference sat in silence, no man answering. The next morning, Wesley, as was his custom, preached before the assembly at five o'clock on the text, "I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me." At the reassembling of the Conference, after the sermon, the appeal was repeated, and the responses deliberately and resolutely made.[4]

Richard Boardman was now about thirty-one years of age, vigorous and zealous. He had preached in the itinerancy about six years. Wesley pronounced him "a pious, good-natured, sensible man, greatly beloved of all that knew him." His Irish brethren, when, thirteen years later, they laid him in his grave, said that "with eloquence divine he preached the word," and "devils trembled when for Christ he fought." One of the old Methodist chroniclers describes him as "a man of great piety, amiable disposition, and strong understanding."[5] Asbury says he was "a kind, loving, worthy man, truly amiable and entertaining, and of a childlike temper."[6] His itinerant training in England, though brief, had been thorough. He had spent two years at least among the fervid Methodists of Yorkshire, and went to America from the rugged and famous Circuit of the "Dales," where hard travels, laborious work, and wintry storms

[4] Speech of Rev. C. Prest (of the Wesleyan Conference) at the anniversary of the Paris Wesleyan Chapel, October 25, 1863. Mr. Prest's authority was the Rev. Jonathan Edmondson. See "The Methodist," New York, Nov. 28, 1863.

[5] Atmore, p. 58.

[6] Strickland's Asbury, p. 86.

were a good preparation for his transatlantic trials. He had perils by flood as well as by land, and some of those hair-breadth escapes which, associated with marvels of dreams, demons, prayer, and providence, give such a Hebraic character to the early ministerial life of Methodism. "I preached one evening," he says, "at Mould, in Flintshire, and next morning set out for Parkgate. After riding some miles, I asked a man if I was on the road to that place. He answered, 'Yes; but you will have some sands to go over, and unless you ride fast you will be in danger of being inclosed by the tide.' It then began to snow to such a degree that I could scarcely see a step of my way. I got to the sands, and pursued my journey over them for some time as rapidly as I could; but the tide then came in and surrounded me on every side, so that I could neither proceed nor turn back, and to ascend the perpendicular rocks was impossible. In this situation I commended my soul to God, not having the least expectation of escaping death. In a little time I perceived two men running down a hill on the other side of the water, and by some means they got a boat, and came to my relief, just as the sea had reached my knees as I sat on my saddle. They took me into the boat, the mare swimming by our side till we reached the land. While we were in the boat, one of the men said, 'Surely, sir, God is with you.' I answered, 'I trust he is.' The man replied, 'I know he is; last night I dreamed that I must go to the top of such a hill. When I awoke the dream made such an impression on my mind that I could not rest. I therefore went and called upon this man to accompany me. When we came to the place we saw nothing more than usual. However, I begged him to go with me to another hill at a small distance, and there we saw your distressed situation.' When we got ashore I went with

my two friends to a public house not far distant from where we landed; and as we were relating the wonderful providence, the landlady said, 'This day month we saw a gentleman just in your situation; but before we could hasten to his relief he plunged into the sea, supposing, as we concluded, that his horse would swim to the shore; but they both sank, and were drowned together.' I gave my deliverers all the money I had, which I think was about eighteen pence, and tarried all night at the hotel. Next morning I was not a little embarrassed how to pay my reckoning, for the want of cash, and begged my landlord would keep a pair of silver spurs till I should redeem them; but he answered, 'The Lord bless you, sir; I would not take a farthing from you for the world.' After some serious conversation with the friendly people I bade them farewell, and recommenced my journey, rejoicing in the Lord, and praising him for his great salvation."[7]

He set out for America mourning the recent loss of his wife, but courageous for his new career. He preached as he journeyed toward Bristol to embark. In the Peak of Derbyshire he stopped for the night at the village of Monyash, where, inquiring for Methodists, he was sent to a humble cottage, and found a hospitable welcome. As usual, he preached in the evening, and was there to achieve greater usefulness perhaps than by all his labors in founding Methodism in the new world. In the rustic assembly sat a young woman, Mary Redfern, listening eagerly for words of consolation from the traveler. She was poor, but rich in the traits of her intellect and character. Under the sermon of Boardman the divine light broke upon her inquiring mind, and soon afterward she received the "peace

[7] Atmore, p. 60.

of God which passeth all understanding." Boardman's text was, "Jabez was more honorable than his brethren: and his mother called his name Jabez, saying, Because I bare him with sorrow. And Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, O that thou wouldest bless me indeed, and enlarge my coast, and that thine hand might be with me, and that thou wouldest keep me from evil, that it may not grieve me. And God granted him that which he requested." 1 Chron. iv, 9, 10. The occasion was too memorable to the young hearer ever to be forgotten, and the text was embalmed in her heart. Nearly ten years after Boardman's sermon she married William Bunting, a Methodist layman; and the next year selected from the text of Boardman a name for her firstborn child, Jabez Bunting, a memento of her gratitude and a prophecy of his history.[8] The name of Jabez Bunting, the chief leader of British Methodism since Wesley, will therefore be forever associated with the first mission from the British Conference to America.

Boardman, continuing to preach on his route, at last joined Pilmoor at Bristol, to embark in the latter part of August.

Pilmoor had been converted in his sixteenth year through the preaching of Wesley, had been educated at Wesley's Kingswood School, and had now itinerated about four years, being admitted to the Conference in 1765. He traveled in Cornwall and Wales. He was a man of good courage, commanding presence, much executive skill, and ready discourse. The two evangelists arrived at Gloucester Point, six miles south of Philadelphia, on the 24th of October, 1769, after a boisterous passage of nine weeks. It seemed that the winds and

[8] Bunting's Life of Bunting, chap. 1. Hist. of the Relig. Movement, etc., iii, 161.

waves were swayed by the "prince of the power of the air" in opposition to a mission so pregnant with moral consequences. The "memory of the oldest man on the continent could not recall such bad gales of winds as those of a few months past," wrote Boardman to Wesley. "Many vessels have been lost, while others have got in with loss of masts and much damage of cargoes. We observed shipwrecks all along the coast of the Delaware. I never understood David's words as I now do, 'They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.'" But the missionaries were sustained by a sublime consciousness of their great errand, and believed that if they should perish in it, He that could raise up others to accomplish it would take care of them in death. "In rough, stormy weather, particularly when it appeared impossible the vessel should live long amid the conflicting elements, I found myself," says Boardman, "exceedingly happy, and rested satisfied that death would be gain. I do not remember to have had one doubt of being eternally saved should the mighty waters swallow us up. This was the Lord's doing. O may it ever be marvelous in my eyes!"

The Methodists of the city were expecting them, Dr. Wrangle, the Swedish missionary, having written to Hood and Wilmer of their appointment. Captain Webb was there to receive them. They immediately began their mission, Pilmoor opening it from the steps of the old State-house on Chestnut-street. Soon afterward he was preaching from the platform of the judges of the race-course on the Common, now Franklin Square, Race-street. In seven days after reaching the city he wrote to Wesley that he "was not a little surprised to find Captain Webb in town, and a society of about one hundred mem-

bers. This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. I have preached several times, and the people flock to hear in multitudes. Sunday night I went out upon the Common. I had the stage, appointed for the horse-race, for my pulpit, and I think between four and five thousand hearers, who heard with attention still as night. Blessed be God for field-preaching! There seems to be a great and effectual door opening in this country, and I hope many souls will be gathered in. When I parted with you at Leeds I found it very hard. I have reason to bless God that ever I saw your face. And though I am well-nigh four thousand miles from you, I have inward fellowship with your spirit. Even while I am writing, my heart flows with love to you and all our dear friends at home."

Boardman, who acted as Wesley's "assistant" or "superintendent" in America, preached in the city "to a great number of people," and quickly departed for the North. Methodist preachers in those days "sowed beside all waters." In a large town on his route through New Jersey (Trenton most probably) he saw a barrack, and inquired of a soldier if any Methodists were there. "Yes, we are all Methodists; that is, would be glad to hear a Methodist preach," was the prompt reply, for Captain Webb had been there, and military men were always proud of both his regimentals and his eloquence. The trooper hastened to the barracks, spread the word among his comrades, and soon the inn where the evangelist had stopped was surrounded. "Where can I preach?" he asked them. "We will get you the Presbyterian church," they replied. The bell was quickly ringing, informing the whole town of the impromptu service. A "great company" assembled, and "were much affected" by the sudden appeal. The next

day Boardman had vanished from among them, and was hastening to New York,[9] where he met a hearty reception and began his mission in John-street Church.

It is an interesting coincidence that while Boardman and Pilmoor were tossed on their tempestuous voyage, Whitefield was borne through the same storms on his final visit to America,[10] his thirteenth passage over the Atlantic. He did not arrive till the last day of November, and had come to die in the great American field which he had so laboriously prepared for Wesley's missionaries. He had taken final leave of Wesley, in a letter, as he embarked. Arriving at his Orphan House in Georgia, his seraphic soul seemed to receive a presentiment of his approaching end, and to anticipate the joys of heaven. "I am happier," he wrote, "than words can express—my happiness is inconceivable." He started to preach northward, and on the evening of his departure recorded the prophetic words, "This will prove a sacred year for me at the day of judgment. Halleluiah! Come, Lord, come!" "Halleluiah! halleluiah!" he wrote to England; "let chapel, tabernacle, heaven, and earth resound with halleluiah! I can no more; my heart is too big to speak or add more!" To Charles Wesley he wrote, "I can only sit down and cry, 'What hath God wrought!' My bodily health is much improved, and my soul is on the wing for another Gospel range. Unutterable love! I am lost in wonder and amazement."[11]

Arriving in Philadelphia, he hailed Wesley's itinerants and "gave them his blessing: it has never failed them." His soul had always, since his conversion, glowed with a divine fire, but it now seemed to kindle into flame. No

[9] Armin. Mag., May, 1784, p. 163.
[10] Jay's Life of Cornelius Winter, Part I, Letter 8.
[11] Hist. of the Relig. Movement, etc. Vol. i, p. 464.

edifices could contain his congregations; he preached every day. He made a tour of five hundred miles up the Hudson, proclaiming his message at Albany, Schenectady, Great Barrington. "O what new scenes of usefulness are opening in various parts of this world!" he wrote as he returned. "I heard afterward that the word ran and was glorified. Grace! grace!" He had penetrated nearly to the north-western frontiers. "He saw the gates of the North-west opening, those great gates through which the nations have since been passing, as in grand procession, but he was not to enter there; the everlasting gates were opening for him, and he was hastening toward them." He passed to Boston, to Newburyport, to Portsmouth, still preaching daily. Seized with illness, he turned back; at Exeter he mounted a hogshead and preached his final sermon to an immense assembly. "His emotions carried him away, and he prolonged his discourse through two hours. It was an effort of stupendous eloquence—his last field triumph—the last of that series of mighty sermons which had been resounding like trumpet blasts for thirty years over England and America." He hastened, exhausted, to Newburyport; the people gathered about his lodging in throngs to see and hear him once more; they pressed into the entry of the house. Taking a candle, he attempted to ascend to his chamber, but pausing on the stairs, he addressed them. "He had preached his last sermon; this was to be his last exhortation. It would seem that some pensive misgiving, some vague presentiment, touched his soul with the apprehension that the moments were too precious to be lost in rest. He lingered on the stairway, while the crowd gazed up at him with tearful eyes, as Elisha at the ascending prophet. His voice, never perhaps surpassed

in its music and pathos, flowed on until the candle which he held in his hand burned away and went out in its socket. The next morning he was not, for God had taken him."

He died of asthma on the 30th of September, 1770, and sleeps beneath the pulpit of the Federal-street Church, Newburyport.[12] He had introduced, as we have seen, the general Methodistic movement into America, and had finished his providential work. The great cause was now to assume an organic form.

On the 4th of November, 1769, Boardman wrote to Wesley:[13] "Our house contains about seventeen hundred people.[14] About a third part of those who attend get in, the rest are glad to hear without. There appears such a willingness in the Americans to hear the word as I never saw before. They have no preaching in some parts of the back settlements. I doubt not but an effectual door will be opened among them. O! may the Most High now give his Son the heathen for his inheritance. The number of blacks that attend the preaching affects me much."

Williams, who had been supplying Wesley Chapel, gave up the charge to Boardman and went southward, joining Strawbridge and King, and extending his labors into Virginia, as we have seen. Embury, relieved of further responsibility for the Society, formed with Ashton, Bininger, Switzer, the Hecks, and others, his little colony for Camden—the founders of the Ashgrove

[12] Jesse Lee, the founder of Methodism in New England, says: "I myself went into the vault to see the body after it had lain there twenty years, and was much surprised to find the greater part of it firm and hard; a small part of it only had putrified."—*Hist. of Meth.*, p. 38. Nothing but the skeleton now remains.

[13] Not the 24th of April, 1770, as Bangs says, i, 63. (See Arm. Mag., 1784, p. 163.)

[14] Doubtless a typographical error for seven hundred.

Church. Boardman's labors were immediately effective. He preached, at least, four sermons weekly, and "met the Society on Wednesday night." He had but two leisure evenings a week. The Church, still poor, provided him with board and about fifteen dollars a quarter for clothing.[15] Among the first-fruits of his labors was the conversion of John Mann, who became a useful preacher and supplied the pulpit at John-street during the Revolutionary War, when the English preachers had either returned home, or gone into retirement. He also became one of the founders of Methodism in Nova Scotia, and died there, in the peace of the Gospel, after nearly half a century of faithful service.[16]

After spending about five months in New York, Boardman exchanged with Pilmoor. They seem to have alternated between the two cities three times a year, in the spring, summer, and autumn; the winter term being five months. We can dimly trace Boardman's labors in New York, through considerable intervals, for four years: from 1769 to 1773; during which "his ministry was blessed to hundreds."[17] In April, 1771, he wrote to Wesley from that city: "It pleases God to carry on his work among us. Within this month we have had a great awakening here. Many begin to believe the report; and to some the arm of the Lord is revealed. This last month we have had near thirty added to the Society, five of whom have received a clear sense of the pardoning love of God. We have, in this city, some of the best preachers (both in the English and Dutch churches) that are in America; yet God works by whom he will work. I have lately been much comforted by the death of some poor negroes, who have gone off the stage of time rejoic-

[15] Wakeley, chap. 21. [16] Arm. Mag., 1818, p. 641.
[17] Ibid. 1785, p. 113.

ing in the God of their salvation. I asked one on the point of death, 'Are you afraid to die?' 'O no,' said she; 'I have my blessed Saviour in my heart; I should be glad to die: I want to be gone, that I may be with him forever. I know that he loves me, and I feel I love him with all my heart.' She continued to declare the great things God had done for her soul, to the astonishment of many, till the Lord took her to himself. Several more seem just ready to be gone; longing for the happy time when mortality shall be swallowed up of life. I bless God I find, in general, my soul happy, though much tried and tempted."

He was equally successful in Philadelphia. He made missionary excursions into Maryland, and preached in Baltimore. We have intimations that in the spring of 1772 he journeyed to the north-east, through Providence, as far as Boston,[18] preaching wherever he found opportunity, and forming a small Society in the latter city.[19] He therefore preceded Lee in New England by seventeen years.

Pilmoor, meanwhile, was abundant in labors in Philadelphia and New York. In the autumn of 1769 he wrote to Wesley from the former city that "there seems to be a great and effectual door opening in the country." In the spring of the next year he wrote, from New York, to Wesley and his Conference, claiming their sympathies and prayers for the laborers in "this remote corner of the world." "We are at present," he says, "far from you, and whether we shall ever be permitted to see you again, God only knows. Dear brethren, I feel you present while I write! But O, the Atlantic is between us! O this state of trial, this state of mutability! This is not our home! This is not our rest! After a

[18] Lee, p. 40. [19] Bangs, anno 1772.

little while we shall rest. Our coming to America has not been in vain. The Lord has been pleased to bless our feeble attempts to advance his kingdom in the world. Many have believed the report, and unto some the arm of the Lord has been revealed. There begins to be a shaking among the dry bones, and they come together that God may breathe upon them. Our congregations are large, and we have the pious of most congregations to hear us. The religion of Jesus is a favorite topic in New York. Many of the gay and polite speak much about grace and perseverance. But whether they would follow Christ 'in sheep-skins and goat-skins,' is a question I cannot affirm. Nevertheless, there are some who are alive to God. Even some of the poor, despised children of Ham are striving to wash their robes, and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. The Society here consists of about a hundred members, besides probationers; and I trust it will soon increase much more abundantly." He adds, that Boardman and himself "are chiefly confined to the cities, and therefore cannot, at present, go much into the country, as we have more work upon our hands than we are able to perform. There is work enough for two preachers in each place; and if two of our brethren would come over, I believe it would be attended with a great blessing. They need not be afraid of wanting the comforts of life; for the people are very hospitable and kind. When we came we put ourselves and the brethren to a great expense, being strangers to the country and the people. But the case is different now, as matters are settled, and everything is provided. If you can send them over we shall gladly provide for them."[20]

Wesley was preparing to respond to this call for more

[20] Arm. Mag., 1784, p. 223.

laborers; they soon arrived, as we shall see. Meanwhile Pilmoor, notwithstanding the urgent necessities of the Churches of New York and Philadelphia, "itinerated" considerably. In the summer of 1770 he went to Baltimore and other parts of Maryland, to aid Strawbridge, Owen, King, and Williams. He preached in that city, standing on the sidewalk; and, being a man of commanding appearance, and withal an able and convincing Preacher, he was heard with much interest.[21] The next year we trace him again to New York, where Williams labored with him. They made an excursion to New Rochelle, where they found a little company gathered for worship, at the house of Frederick Deveau. A clergyman present refused Pilmoor the privilege of addressing the meeting; but the wife of Deveau, lying sick in an adjacent room, saw him through the opened door, and gave him a mysterious recognition. During her illness she had had much trouble of mind; she had dreamed that she was wandering in a dismal swamp, without path, or light, or guide; when, exhausted with fatigue and about to sink down hopeless, a stranger appeared with a light and led her out of the miry labyrinth. At the first glance she now identified Pilmoor with the apparition of her dream, and appealed to him, from her sick bed, to preach to her and the waiting company. He did so; and while "he was offering to all a present, free, full salvation," the invalid was converted, and in a few days died "triumphant in the Lord!" These singular events awakened general attention; Pilmoor preached again to the whole neighborhood,[22] and Methodism was effectively introduced into New Rochelle, where, not long after, Asbury was to form the third Methodist Society of the state, after

[21] Dr. Hamilton, Meth. Quart. Rev., 1856, p. 440.
[22] Rev. D. Devinne, in Lednum, chap. 10.

those of John-street and Ashgrove. The beautiful town became the favorite resort of Asbury and his compeers for occasional repose from their travels, though not from their labors;[23] the fountain whence Methodism spread through all Westchester county; its easternmost outpost, whence it, at last, invaded New England.

There are allusions in our early records to several expeditions of Pilmoor to the South. He preached in Norfolk, traveled through the southern parts of Virginia and through North Carolina, to Charleston in South Carolina. He reached, at last, Savannah, Georgia, and made a pilgrimage to Whitefield's Orphan House, scattering the good seed over all his route.[24] He spent nearly a year in this excursion, but left no record of its events. It is said, however, that he had many hair-breadth escapes of life and limb. He encountered the violence of the elements and of persecutors. At Charleston he could obtain no place for preaching but the Theater, where, while fervently delivering a sermon, "suddenly the table used by him for a pulpit, with the chair he occupied, disappeared," descending through a trap-door into the cellar. Some wags, of the "baser sort," had contrived the trick as a practical joke. Nothing discouraged, however, the preacher, springing upon the stage with the table in his hands, invited the audience to the adjoining yard, adding pleasantly, "Come on, my friends, we will, by the grace of God, defeat the devil this time, and not be driven by him from our work," and then quietly finished his discourse. The fruits of his Christian labors appeared in the conversion of many souls. Wherever he went large crowds attended his ministry, and listened to his message.[25]

[23] Asbury's Journals, *passim*. [24] Lee, p. 39.

[25] Letter of G. P. Disosway, Esq., to the author. See "The Methodist," Dec. 5, 1863.

Other messengers, from Wesley, were on the sea, hastening to the help of these laborers. One of them was destined to become the most notable character in the ecclesiastical history of North America, and was soon to eclipse all his predecessors in that great scheme of itinerancy which was to extend its network of evangelization over the continent. They were to be his co-workers for some time; we may, therefore, before tracing further their labors, properly introduce him upon the scene.

CHAPTER V.

WESLEY'S AMERICAN MISSIONARIES, CONTINUED.

America appears in Wesley's Minutes — Appeal for more Preachers — More sent — Early Life of Francis Asbury — Methodism in Staffordshire — Asbury becomes a Methodist — His Character — He embarks for America — Richard Wright, his Companion — Their Arrival in Philadelphia — Number of Methodists in America — St. George's Chapel — The First Philadelphia Methodists — Bohemia Manor — Asbury in New Jersey — Peter Van Pelt — Staten Island — Methodism there — Israel Disosway — Asbury enters New York — He contends for the Itinerancy — He extemporizes a Circuit — In Philadelphia — The Itinerancy in Operation — Asbury's Preaching and Spirit — Wesley appoints him "Assistant" or Superintendent — His Labors in Maryland — In Baltimore — A Quarterly Conference — Asbury forms Classes in Baltimore — First Methodist Chapel there — Asbury's Baltimore Circuit — Quarterly Conference.

The name of "America" appears, in 1770, for the first time in Wesley's list of appointments. Four preachers are recorded as composing the little corps of its Methodist evangelists: Joseph Pilmoor, Richard Boardman, Robert Williams, and John King. In the Minutes of the next year America appears for the first time in the list of returns of members of Society. It reports three hundred and sixteen. Captain Webb was still abroad laboring in the middle colonies, and was appealing to Wesley for more preachers. Pilmoor and Boardman also wrote to him, calling for recruits. Their reports of success, with the returns of more than three hundred members in their infant Churches, could not be resisted by Wesley; and though British Methodism was now in an anxious crisis, the disjunction of its Calvinistic and Arminian parties, and the Conference of 1771 was agita-

ted by that controversy and by the presence and remonstrance of Shirley, one of the Calvinistic leaders—the origin of the great Arminian contest of the last century, and of Fletcher's memorable "Checks,"—yet Wesley turned from the gathering storm and pointed the Conference again to the brightening light in the Western sky. "Our brethren in America call aloud for help," he said to the assembled body; "who are willing to go over and help them?" Five responded, and two were appointed. They were all that could be spared from the urgent work at home, supplied as yet by but about a hundred and twenty effective itinerants.

One of them was a young man who is henceforth to occupy so prominent a place in our narrative, and in the recording of whose history the Church has been so dilatory, that we may well attempt solicitously to trace the scanty details of his extraordinary life which yet remain. He was the only son of an intelligent peasant of the Parish of Handsworth, Staffordshire, who was "remarkable for honesty and industry," "having all things needful to enjoy," and who "might have been wealthy had he been as saving as he was laborious;" but, contented with rural tranquillity and simplicity, he was "farmer and gardener to the two richest families of the parish."[1] The death of an only daughter, a "darling child," produced such an impression upon the heart of the mother of the family as to lead her to a religious life and to a passionate love of books, the best reliefs to the maternal grief which clung to her through a long life. She "strongly urged" her husband "to family reading and prayer." She trained her only remaining child with religious care. He never "dared an oath or hazarded a lie." His youthful associates were addicted to the usual

[1] Asbury's Journals, vol. ii, p. 157. Ed. of 1852.

vices of their age, but he "often retired from their society uneasy and melancholy." His intelligent parents could appreciate the value of education and early sent him to school. He could read the Bible when but seven years of age, and "greatly delighted in its historical parts." "My schoolmaster," he says, "was a great churl, and used to beat me cruelly; this drove me to prayer, and it appeared to me that God was near to me. My father having but the one son greatly desired to keep me at school, he cared not how long; but in this design he was disappointed; for my master, by his severity, had filled me with such horrible dread, that with me anything was preferable to going to school. I lived some time in one of the wealthiest and most ungodly families we had in the parish. Here I became vain, but not openly wicked. Some months after this I returned home, and made my choice, when about thirteen years and a half old, to learn a branch of business at which I wrought about six years and a half; during this time I enjoyed great liberty, and in the family was treated more like a son or an equal than an apprentice. God sent a pious man, not a Methodist, into our neighborhood, and my mother invited him to our house. By his conversation and prayers I was awakened before I was fourteen years of age. I began to pray morning and evening, being drawn by the cords of love as with the bands of a man."

He resorted to West Bromwich Church, about five miles from Birmingham, on the highway to Liverpool, where he heard Talbot, Hawes, Bagnall, Venn, and others, notable "Calvinistic Methodists" of that day, friends of Whitefield and the Countess of Huntingdon. The Earl of Dartmouth's residence was in the vicinity, and was the asylum of the preachers, who sometimes

held meetings in the hall of the Methodistic nobleman. The youthful inquirer read the Calvinistic Methodist books of the time, especially the sermons of Whitefield. He asked his mother "who and what were the Methodists?" for the Arminian or Wesleyan Methodists had made an extraordinary stir in Staffordshire, and were "everywhere spoken against." In no part of the United Kingdom had they encountered severer conflicts. It was there, as we have seen, that Charles Wesley could distinguish, by their marks of violence, the homes of Methodists as he rode through its villages; that the mob planted a flag and kept it flying several days in defiance of the authorities; that Methodist men and women had to flee with their children to escape death; that the rabble, dividing into several companies, marched from village to village, placing "the whole region in a state little short of civil war." Relics of ruined furniture are still kept in Methodist families of the county as sacred mementoes of those days of the fiery trial of their fathers. Wednesbury, not far from the home of the good farmer of Handsworth, and where his young son was first to meet with Wesleyans, was especially the scene of such outrages. The mob reigned for nearly a week in that town; houses of Methodists were broken into, furniture destroyed and thrown out the windows, and portable property carried away by the rioters, who passed with burdens of it unchecked along the streets; Methodist men were knocked down before their houses, Methodist women maltreated in a way which Wesley says he dare not describe. Wesley himself had been insulted, beaten with bludgeons, and led by an uncontrollable mob through the streets during much of a rainy night, hardly expecting to survive till morning; the "noise on every side being," he says, "like the roaring of the sea." The

devout youth of Handsworth had heard of this persecuted people; some of them had knocked at the cottage door of his mother in his early childhood, had been welcomed there, and the neighbors been invited in to hear them sing, pray, and "exhort." To his inquiries about them now she replied with a "favorable account," and directed him to a person who could take him to Wednesbury to hear them. He went, and was surprised at everything he saw; they met, not in a church, "but it was better;" "the people were so devout, men and women kneeling down, saying Amen." He was delighted with their singing. Accustomed, in his parish church, to prelections rather than preaching, he was surprised to hear sermons without a sermon book, "wonderful" prayers without a prayer book. "It is certainly," he wrote, "a strange way, but the best way. The preacher talked about confidence, assurance, etc., of which all my flights and hopes fell short. I had no deep convictions, nor had I committed any deep known sins. At one sermon, some time after, my companion was powerfully wrought on; I was exceedingly grieved that I could not weep like him; yet I knew myself to be in a state of unbelief. On a certain time when we were praying in my father's barn I believe the Lord pardoned my sins and justified my soul. After this, we met for reading and prayer, and had large and good meetings, and were much persecuted, until the persons at whose houses we held them were afraid, and they were discontinued. I then held meetings frequently at my father's house, exhorting the people there, as also at Sutton Coldfield, and several souls professed to find peace through my labors. I met in Class a while at Bromwich-Heath, and met in Band at Wednesbury. I had preached some months before I publicly appeared in the Methodist meeting-houses, when

my labors became more public and extensive: some were amazed, not knowing how I had exercised elsewhere. Behold me now a Local Preacher, the humble and willing servant of any and of every preacher that called on me by night or by day; being ready, with hasty steps, to go far and wide to do good, visiting Derbyshire, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Worcestershire, and indeed almost every place within my reach, for the sake of precious souls; preaching, generally, three, four, and five times a week, and at the same time pursuing my calling. I think, when I was between twenty-one and twenty-two years of age I gave myself up to God and his work after acting as a Local Preacher nearly five years."

He was only about seventeen years old when he began to hold public meetings, not eighteen when he began to preach, and about twenty-one when he started out as an itinerant, supplying the place of an absent traveling preacher, though not yet received by the Annual Conference.

When appointed by Wesley to America he was a young man, about twenty-six years of age. He had been in the traveling ministry only about five years, and but four years on the catalogue of regular appointments, but had seen hard service on Bedfordshire, Colchester, and Wiltshire circuits. He was studious, somewhat introspective, with a thoughtfulness which was tinged at times with melancholy. His was one of those minds which can find rest only in labor; designed for great work, and therefore endowed with a restless instinct for it. He was an incessant preacher, of singular practical directness; was ever in motion, on foot or on horseback over his long circuits; a rigorous disciplinarian, disposed to do everything by method; a man of few words, and those always to the point; of quick and marvelous

insight into character; of a sobriety, not to say severity of temperament, which might have been repulsive had it not been softened by a profound religious humility, for his soul, ever aspiring to the highest virtue, was ever complaining within itself over its shortcomings. His mind had eminently a military cast. He never lost his self-possession, and could therefore seldom be surprised. He seemed not to know fear, and never yielded to discouragement in a course sanctioned by his faith or conscience. He could plan sagaciously, seldom pausing to consider theories of wisdom or policy, but as seldom failing in practical prudence. The rigor which his disciplinary predilections imposed upon others was so exemplified by himself, that his associates or subordinates, instead of revolting from it, accepted it as a challenge of heroic emulation. Discerning men could not come into his presence without perceiving that his soul was essentially heroic, and that nothing committed to his agency could fail, if it depended upon conscientiousness, prudence, courage, labor, and persistence. "Who," says one who knew him intimately, "who of us could be in his company without feeling impressed with a reverential awe and profound respect? It was almost impossible to approach him without feeling the strong influence of his spirit and presence. There was something in this remarkable fact almost inexplicable and indescribable. Was it owing to the strength and elevation of his spirit, the sublime conceptions of his mind, the dignity and majesty of his soul, or the sacred profession with which he was clothed, as an embassador of God, invested with divine authority? But so it was; it appeared as though the very atmosphere in which he moved gave unusual sensations of diffidence and humble restraint to the boldest confidence of man."[2] Withal

[2] Ezekiel Cooper, Asbury's Funeral Sermon, p. 25.

his appearance was in his favor. In his most familiar portrait he has the war-worn aspect of a military veteran, but in earlier life his frame was robust, his countenance full, fresh, and expressive of generous if not refined feelings. He was somewhat attentive to his apparel, and always maintained an easy dignity of manners, which commanded the respect if not the affection of his associates. The appeals from the American Methodists had reached him in his rural circuits, for he had never left his ministerial work to attend the Annual Conference. Two months before the session of 1771 his mind had been impressed with the thought that America was his destined field of labor. He saw in the new world a befitting sphere for his apostolic aspirations.

These great qualities, made manifest in his subsequent career, were inherent in the man, and Wesley could not fail to perceive them. He not only accepted him for America, but, notwithstanding his youth, appointed him, at the ensuing conference, at the head of the American ministerial itinerancy.

Receiving his appointment, he returned from the conference at Bristol to take leave of his friends. "I went home," he writes, "to acquaint my parents with my great undertaking, which I opened in as gentle a manner as possible. Though it was grievous to flesh and blood, they consented to let me go. My mother is one of the tenderest parents in the world; but I believe she was blessed in the present instance with Divine assistance to part with me. I visited most of my friends in Staffordshire, Warwickshire, and Gloucestershire, and felt much life and power among them. Several of our meetings were indeed held in the spirit and life of God. Many of my friends were struck with wonder when they heard of my going, but none opened their mouths against it, hop-

ing it was of God. Some wished that their situation would allow them to go with me." He arrived at last at Bristol to embark, but without a penny for his expenses. "Yet," he writes, "the Lord soon opened the hearts of friends, who supplied me with clothes and ten pounds: thus I found, by experience, that he will provide for those who trust in him." The ship sailed on the 4th of September. He had but two blankets for his bed, and slept with them on the hard boards during the voyage. "I want," he writes, "faith, courage, patience, meekness, love. When others suffer so much for their temporal interests, surely I may suffer a little for the glory of God and the good of souls. I feel my spirit bound to the new world, and my heart united to the people, though unknown; and have great cause to believe that I am not running before I am sent. The more troubles I meet with, the more convinced I am that I am doing the will of God." When eight days out he wrote, "Whither am I going? To the new world. What to do? To gain honor? No, if I know my own heart. To get money? No; I am going to live to God, and to bring others so to do. If God does not acknowledge me in America I will soon return to England. I know my views are upright now: may they never be otherwise."

He preached frequently on the voyage, and spent his leisure time "in prayer, retirement, and reading." "My spirit," he wrote, "mourns and thirsts after entire devotion." Such was Francis Asbury.

His companion, Richard Wright, had traveled but one year in England when he set out on his voyage to America. We know but little of his history, scarcely more indeed than that he accompanied Asbury; that he spent most of his time, while here, in Maryland and Vir

ginia, and a part of it, in the spring of 1772, in New York city; that in the early part of 1773 he was again in Virginia, laboring in Norfolk; and that in 1774 he returned to England, where, after three years spent in the itinerancy, he ceased to travel, and totally disappeared from the published records of the denomination.[1]

After a voyage of more than fifty days they reached Philadelphia, "and," says Asbury, "were brought in the evening to a large church, where we met with a considerable congregation. Mr. Pilmoor preached. The people looked on us with pleasure, hardly knowing how to show their love sufficiently, bidding us welcome with fervent affection, and receiving us as angels of God. O that we may always walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called! When I came near the American shore my very heart melted within me to think from whence I came, whither I was going, and what I was going about. But I felt my mind opened to the people, and my tongue loosed to speak. I feel that God is here, and find plenty of all we need." On the third of November he writes, "I find my mind drawn heavenward. The Lord hath helped me by his power, and my soul is in a paradise. May God keep me as the apple of his eye till all the storms of life are past." On the fourth of November he says, "We held a watch-night. It began at eight o'clock. Mr. Pilmoor preached, and the people attended with great seriousness. Very few left the solemn place till the conclusion. Toward the end a plain man spoke, who came out of the country, and his words went with great power to the souls of the people, so that we may say, 'Who hath despised the day of small things?' Not the Lord our God; then why should self-important

[1] Sandford's "Wesley's Missionaries to America," p. 28. New York, 1844.

man?" The next day he writes, "My own mind is fixed on God; he hath helped me. Glory be to him that liveth and abideth forever." On the sixth he writes, "I preached at Philadelphia my last sermon, before I set out for New York, on Rom. viii, 32: 'He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things?' This also was a night of power to my own and many other souls." Thus devoutly did he begin his great American mission.

There were now probably about six hundred Methodists in the colonies,[4] and at least ten preachers, including Embury, Webb, Williams, King, and Owen, besides Wesley's missionaries. The "large church" in which Asbury heard Pilmoor preach on the evening of his arrival was St. George's, still standing, and revered as the "Old Cathedral" of Methodism in Philadelphia. It had been built by a German Reformed Society, but its projectors failed, and sold it in 1770 to Miles Pennington, one of the first members of the first class, of seven persons, formed in the city by Captain Webb in 1768. It was probably at the instance of Webb that Pennington obtained it, for the veteran soldier knew the value of fortified fields. He gave liberally from his own funds toward it. The same year it was conveyed to the captain and others as trustees of the Methodist Society For a long time it was unfinished and unfurnished, only half floored with rough boards, its pulpit a rude square box on the north side. "In process of time," says a Methodist chronicler, "it was floored from end to end, and more comely seats were put in it, with a new pulpit, like a tall tub on a post, which was the fashion of the times, but one of the worst fashions that ever was for a pulpit. It was too high, it held but one person, and

[4] Bangs, i, p. 69.

scarcely had room in it to allow any action of the speaker. This second pulpit stood in the right place—in the center of the east end of the church. The house was not plastered till Dr. Coke came to America, and the Methodists were organized into a Church. There was no church in the connection that Mr. Asbury labored as much for as St. George's. It was for nearly fifty years the largest place of worship that the Methodists had in America. It was their cathedral."[5] Such was the first of that series of Methodist chapels in Philadelphia, which has ever since grown more rapidly than the chapel provisions of any other denomination in the city, orthodox or heterodox, and amounts in our day to seventy-two places of worship, more than one sixth of all the city churches.[6]

The new missionaries found warm hearts in the shell of St. George's Chapel. There was James Emerson, the first class-leader of the city; Miles Pennington, who had ventured, under the inspiration of Webb, to assume the whole responsibility of the purchase of the edifice; Robert Fitzgerald, and John Hood, the friend of Dr. Wrangle, the Swedish friend of Methodism; these four, with some of their wives, constituted the first class of seven. Hood was now Emerson's successor as leader, and afterward became a Local Preacher. His faithful associate, Lambert Wilmer, the other friend of Wrangle, had joined the class soon after its organization, and was

[5] Lednum, p. 47.

[6] Christ. Adv. and Journal, Dec. 10, 1863. "The largest increase during the half century has been achieved by the Methodists, the Episcopalians and Presbyterians being next in order. The number of churches in our city now is about eightfold greater than it was in 1811, while our population is scarcely six times as large; which, considering the fact that churches now are, as a general thing, much more spacious, is proof that, relatively, our church accommodations at least have largely increased."—*Philadelphia Daily Press.*

at hand to welcome the missionaries. His wife became a female Class-leader of St. George's, and their house was the endeared asylum of the itinerants for many years. The friendship of Wilmer and Hood lasted, as we have seen, to the end, and they sleep together in one grave. "John Hood continued a member of St. George's, acting as a Local Preacher, Class-leader, and clerk: he was in his day one of the 'sweet singers of Israel.' When he stood up to sing in St. George's, his pleasing countenance seemed to have heaven daguerreotyped upon it, and his sweet voice was in harmony with his face. He was one of the best of Christians, beloved by all that knew him."[7] "Heaven," was the last word uttered by his dying lips. He fell asleep, probably the oldest Methodist in the new world.[8]

Having refreshed themselves among these fervent brethren, the missionaries took their departure for new fields; Asbury to the North, Wright to the South. The latter spent the winter mostly on Bohemia Manor in Maryland. Whitefield had preached there often. "The chief families—the Bayards and Bouchells—were mostly his disciples. There is a room in a certain house where he slept, prayed, and studied, that is still called Whitefield's room. The Wesleyans now began to cultivate this field. Solomon Hersey, who lived below the present Bohemia Mills, at what was then called Sluyter's Mill, was the first available friend to Methodism. He had the preaching at his house for a number of years; and though the first Methodist preaching on the Eastern Shore of Maryland was in Kent county, yet the evidence in the case leads us to believe that the first Society on this shore was formed at Hersey's in 1772. This

[7] Lednum, p. 42.
[8] Ibid. He died in 1829, in his eightieth year.

Society is still represented at the Manor Chapel. The old Log Chapel which was called Bethesda, and fell into decay an age ago, was built between 1780 and 1790. The Methodists had another appointment at Thompson's school-house, where a Society was raised up, at a later date, and a chapel called Bethel (at Back Creek) was erected subsequent to 1790. These two appointments were established on what was called Bohemia Manor, as early as 1771. While Wright was laboring on Bohemia Manor, his attachments became so strong to the people that it was feared he would settle there. He had the art of pleasing, and it is likely that overtures were made to him by some of the principal men, in view of having constant instead of occasional preaching."[9]

On Wednesday, November 7, Asbury started from Philadelphia on his route through New Jersey for New York. He preached in the Court-house at Burlington to a large throng, "his heart being much opened." Passing on, he was saluted by Peter Van Pelt, who had heard him in Philadelphia, and now became his life-long friend. He resided on Staten Island, and constrained Asbury to spend a few days at his hospitable mansion. The early Methodist itinerants, devoting all to what they deemed God's work, expected him to take care of them in all things. Asbury, as we have seen, arrived in Bristol to embark for America "without a penny" in his pocket, but the providential provision for his voyage came with its necessity. He accepted the invitation to Staten Island as also providential, and was not disappointed, for important consequences were to follow it. "I believe," he wrote at the time, "God hath sent us to this country. All I seek is to be more spiritual, and given up entirely to Him whom I love." His frame of

[9] Lednum, p. 73.

mind was compatible with his new work. "On the Lord's day, in the morning, November 11," he adds, "I preached again to a large company of people, with some enlargement of mind, at the house of my worthy friend Mr. Van Pelt; in the afternoon to a still larger congregation; and was invited in the evening to the house of Justice Wright, where I had a large company to hear me. Still evidence grows upon me, and I trust I am in the order of God, and that there will be a willing people here. My soul has been much affected with them. My heart and mouth are open; only I am still sensible of my deep insufficiency, and that mostly with regard to holiness. It is true, God has given me some gifts; but what are they to holiness? It is for holiness my spirit mourns. I wish to walk constantly before God without reproof."

This was probably the first Methodist preaching on the beautiful island, and opened the way for it to become one of the garden spots of the denomination, with its six Methodist Churches of our day, though it is only fourteen miles in length, with but from two to four in breadth. Peter Van Pelt and Justice Wright continued to be steadfast friends of the infant cause, and their houses were long favorite homes of Asbury and his fellow-laborers. Benjamin Van Pelt, the brother of Peter, became a useful Local Preacher, and one of the founders of Methodism in Tennessee, then the furthest West.[10]

[1] Rev. Wm. Burke, a Western pioneer itinerant, says, "He had considerable talents, and was very useful in that new country. Several Societies were formed by his ministry, and one of the first Methodist chapels in this country was Van Pelt's Meeting-house. He was one of the 'Fathers' of Methodism in East Tennessee, where he settled between 1780 and 1790. He was a close and constant friend of Bishop Asbury. He will be long remembered by the people of the French Broad country."

Asbury often returned to the island. At one of his early visits a new and memorable name appears in his Journal, that of Israel Disosway. "Surely," wrote the evangelist, "God sent me to these people at first, and I trust he will continue to bless them and pour out his Spirit upon them, and receive them at last to himself." His prayer has since been answered in hundreds if not thousands of instances. He now preached at the houses of Van Pelt, Wright, and Disosway. There were already about half a dozen preaching places on the island. Israel Disosway became its first Class-leader. Its first quarterly meeting was held in his barn, and the timbers of its first Methodist church were cut from his trees.[11] He removed to New York, and lived long a pillar in Embury's Society, at John-street, and his name, represented by his descendants, is still familiar and honored in the Methodism of the metropolis.

Asbury arrived in the city on the 12th of November. "Now," he wrote as he entered it, "Now I must apply myself to my old work—to watch, and fight, and pray. Lord, help." Boardman, "a worthy, loving man," welcomed him. He opened his commission the next day with a characteristic sermon on the text, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and him crucified." He was in the pulpit again the following day, and wrote at its conclusion, "My heart is truly enlarged, and I know that the life and power of religion is here." The Sabbath was a joyful occasion to him; he had been heartily received, and his spirit was kindled with the fervor of his zeal. "Lord, help me against the mighty," he wrote. "I feel a regard for the people, and I think the Americans are more ready to receive the word than the English; and to see the poor

[11] Gabriel P. Disosway, in Lednum, p. 421.

negroes so affected is pleasing; to see their sable countenances in our solemn assemblies, and to hear them sing with cheerful melody their Redeemer's praise, affected me much, and made me ready to say, 'Of a truth I perceive God is no respecter of persons.'"

He could not be content, however, with stationary labors. He had always, since the commencement of his ministry, been an itinerant, and he must always continue such. Boardman and Pilmoor, as we have seen, confined themselves mostly to the cities of Philadelphia and New York, for the occasional exceptions, already noticed, took place mostly after Asbury's arrival, and at his instance. In about a week after reaching New York Asbury writes: "I have not yet the thing which I seek—a circulation of preachers. I am fixed to the Methodist plan; I am willing to suffer, yea, to die, sooner than betray so good a cause by any means. It will be a hard matter to stand against all opposition, as an iron pillar strong, and steadfast as a wall of brass; but through Christ strengthening me I can do all things." Supremely important was this disposition. Wesley had rightly estimated his man when he commissioned Asbury for the Western world. For however expedient modifications of the itinerancy might become, in the maturity of the denomination, it was now, as we have seen, the great necessity of the country and the special work of Methodism in it. But there was already spreading among the young Societies a disposition to localize their few pastors. Many of the oldest itinerants, during the remainder of the century, favored this tendency, and ceased to travel.[12] Asbury, speaking of Wright, said, "I fear after all he will settle on Bohemia." Pilmoor and Boardman were also

[12] "I find," writes Asbury, "that preachers have their friends in the cities, and care not to leave them."—*Journals*, anno 1772.

inclined to settle in Philadelphia and New York. Strawbridge, though his name appears in the Minutes of 1773 and 1775, was subsequently settled over the Sam's Creek and Bush Forest congregations; and Asbury himself had "a call" to an Episcopal church in Maryland. The Church and the nation owe the maintenance of the itinerancy, with its incalculable blessings, chiefly to the invincible energy of Francis Asbury.

On the 22d he writes: "At present I am dissatisfied. I judge we are to be shut up in the cities this winter. My brethren seem unwilling to leave the cities, but I think I shall show them the way. I am in trouble, and more trouble is at hand, for I am determined to make a stand against all partiality. I have nothing to seek but the glory of God; nothing to fear but his displeasure. I am come over with an upright intention, and through the grace of God I will make it appear; and I am determined that no man shall bias me with soft words and fair speeches; nor will I ever fear (the Lord helping me) the face of man, or know any man after the flesh if I beg my bread from door to door; but whomsoever I please or displease I will be faithful to God, to the people, and to my own soul."

It was soon seen that he was not to be shaken in his purpose. There must be a winter campaign, and henceforth, while he lived, no cantonments, no winter-quarters. In a short time he had formed an extemporary circuit in the country around the city, including Westchester County and Staten Island. He hastened continually from his head-quarters in the metropolis to many of the neighboring towns and villages, to West Farms, New Rochelle, where he was entertained by Deveau; to Mamaroneck, Rye, East Chester, and many other places; preaching in court-houses, private houses, occasionally in

Churches, sometimes in the open air. He continued thus to travel till the latter part of March, 1772, when he again passed over the scenes of Webb's labors in New Jersey, preaching almost daily till he arrived in Philadelphia, where he was refreshed to meet Webb and Boardman. The latter, as Superintendent, sketched a plan of labor for some ensuing months. Boardman, himself, was to go eastward on his visit to Boston, Pilmoor to Virginia, Wright to New York, and Asbury was to stay three months in and about Philadelphia. He was immediately abroad, preaching in Chester, Wilmington, New Castle, and reached Bohemia Manor, the late field of Wright. Returning to Philadelphia, he wrote, "I hope that before long about seven preachers of us will spread over seven or eight hundred miles." He was quickly traveling southward in New Jersey; back again to the city; then northward in New Jersey, and again to the city. He thus formed the Philadelphia Circuit, which reached to Trenton, N. J. The itineracy was at last fairly initiated. Boardman returned to him from the East with reports of New England; Pilmoor, on his way to Virginia, wrote him a letter from Maryland "replete with accounts of his preaching abroad, and in the Church, to large congregations, and the like."

In July, 1772, Boardman renewed his Plan of Appointments, taking charge himself of Philadelphia, with excursions to Delaware and Maryland; sending Asbury again to New York; Wright to Maryland, to assist Strawbridge, King, and Williams; and Pilmoor to Virginia. Such are the sparse details we can glean of the early itinerancy; limited almost to meager names and dates, and yet signifying much. Asbury was evidently giving propulsion to the work. In his unintermitted excursions he was waking up preachers, societies, and the pop-

ulation generally. He preached mostly in private houses, sometimes in court-houses, less frequently in churches, sometimes in the woods, at others in prisons, especially where there were culprits condemned to death; and that was a day of much hanging. Sometimes he mounted a wagon at the gallows, impressing with awe the hardened multitude. At Burlington, N. J., he writes: "I preached under the jail wall, and for the benefit of the prisoner attended him to the place of execution. When he came forth he roared like a bull in a net. He looked on every side, and shrieked for help; but all in vain. O how awful! Die he must—I fear unprepared. I prayed with him and for him. I saw him tied up; and then, stepping on a wagon, I spoke a word in season, and warned the people to flee from the wrath to come, and improve the day of their gracious visitation, no more grieving the Spirit of God, lest a day should come in which they may cry, and God may refuse to hear them."

He frequently availed himself of such opportunities, sometimes with better results. Attending an execution at Chester, he says, "John King went with me. We found the prisoners penitent; and two of the four obtained peace with God, and seemed very thankful. I preached with liberty to a great number of people under the jail wall. John King preached at the gallows to a vast multitude; after which I prayed with them." Again, at Burlington, he says he attended the execution of a murderer, and declared to a great number of people under the jail wall, "He healeth the broken in heart." "The poor criminal appeared penitent, behaved with great solidity, and expressed a desire to leave the world. I then returned to Philadelphia and gave an exhortation that night." He was immediately back again at Burlington, "and spent three days laboring among them. Many

seemed much stirred up to seek the kingdom of God." Thus was he "instant in season and out of season." His sermons were now, frequently, two or three a day; yet he exclaims, "How is my soul troubled that I am not more devoted! O my God, my soul groans and longs for this!" "My way is to go straight forward!" "Hitherto the Lord hath helped me!" "I want to breathe after the Lord in every breath." "I preached with life, and long to be as an ever-rising flame of fire!" "My soul was lively, and my heart filled with holy thoughts of God! I felt a strong and pure desire to pray and mourn and long for God!" Such are the ejaculations that almost continually break from his ardent soul in these unceasing labors. His remarkable subsequent career, the "giants of those days" who rose up in all parts of the itinerant field, the great outspread of Methodism over the continent, have much of their explanation in these early indications of the great man who had thus suddenly appeared in the arena. I have therefore deemed it proper to introduce him to the reader as completely as the paucity of the cotemporary records will admit. It was impossible that he should not be quickly recognized by the multiplying Societies as their providential leader. A historian of Methodism says: "The consequence of thus extending his labors into the country towns and villages was the giving a new and more vigorous impulse to religious zeal, and of calling the attention of multitudes to the Gospel message who otherwise might never have heard it. This example of Asbury had its effect upon the other Preachers, and in the latter part of the year some of them visited the provinces of Delaware and Maryland, and preached on the Western and Eastern Shore of Maryland. Two private members of the Society raised up by Strawbridge, were the first Methodists who visited Ken-

County, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. They came to one John Randal's, conversed and prayed with the family, and left behind them some salutary impressions. This created a desire for Methodist preaching; and shortly after Strawbridge himself paid them a visit, and preached to them the Gospel of Christ. He was followed by Robert Williams; and in December following 1772, Asbury went into Kent County. Through the persevering labors of Asbury, and others associated with him, a gracious work was commenced on this peninsula, which has resulted in great good to the souls of thousands."[13]

It was under the impulse of Asbury's example that Robert Williams now went to Virginia and preached on the steps of the Norfolk Court-House, and that Pilmoor went preaching southward as far as Savannah.

In the autumn of 1772 Asbury was again laboring in and all around New York. He there received a letter from Wesley appointing him "Assistant" or Superintendent of the American Societies, though he was yet but about twenty-seven years of age. He thus took charge of all the churches and the appointments of the Preachers, subject to the authority of Wesley.

He now turned southward, scattering the good seed as he went, and inspiriting the Societies and Preachers. He preached almost daily, sometimes as early as five o'clock in the morning. At Princeton he met Boardman, reduced from an "Assistant" to a "Helper,"[14] but, writes Asbury, "we both agreed in judgment about the affairs of the Society, and were comforted together." He passes on rapidly through Philadelphia and Delaware, and in

[13] Bangs, i, 71.

[14] Wesley's ordinary Circuit Preachers in England were called his "Helpers," the Superintendents of Circuits were called his "Assistants."

Maryland finds the cause spreading in all directions. He reaches the house of Henry Watters, "whose brother is an exhorter, and now gone with Mr. Williams to Virginia. The Lord hath done great things for these people, notwithstanding the weakness of the instruments, and some little irregularities. Men who neither feared God nor regarded man—swearers, liars, cock-fighters, card-players, horse-racers, drunkards, etc.—are now so changed as to become new men; and they are filled with the praises of God. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us; but unto thy name be all the glory!"

Young Watters we shall soon meet, and find him sustaining worthily his distinction as the first native Methodist itinerant of America. Asbury preached at the house of "friend Gatch," another name which was to become conspicuous in the early history of the Church. We trace him further to the home of Richard Owen, the first native Local Preacher, "where the Lord enabled" him "to preach with much feeling to a great number of people;" to "friend Durbin's," another primitive ministerial name; to the Sam's Creek 'Log Meeting-house" of Strawbridge. He entered Baltimore and preached there, but was soon away again, hastening from town to town.

In December, having "gone round that part of his circuit which lay on the Western Shore, he crossed, in company with John King, the Susquehanna, to visit that part of it which lay on the Peninsula, between Chester River and Wilmington. His circuit, which lay in six counties, would be considered quite large at this day."[16] At last, recrossing the Susquehanna River, he "came to his Quarterly Conference at J. Presbury's, in Christmas week, 1772." There had been no Annual Conference yet in America, and this was the first Quarterly Conference

[16] Lednum, p. 85.

of which we have any account. Asbury says, "Many people attended and several friends came miles. I preached from Acts xx, 28: 'Take heed therefore unto yourselves.' We afterward proceeded to our temporal business, and considered the following propositions: 1. What are our collections? We found them sufficient to defray our expenses. 2. How are the Preachers stationed? Brother Strawbridge and Brother Owen in Frederick county. Brother King, Brother Webster, and Isaac Rollins, on the other side of the bay, and myself in Baltimore. 3. Shall we be strict in our Society meetings, and not admit strangers? Agreed. 4. Shall we drop preaching in the day-time through the week? Not agreed to. 5. Will the people be contented without our administering the sacrament? John King was neuter; Brother Strawbridge pleaded much for the ordinances; and so did the people, who appeared to be much biased by him. I told them I would not agree to it at that time, and insisted on our abiding by our rules. But Mr. Boardman had given them their way at the Quarterly Meeting, held here before, and I was obliged to connive at some things for the sake of peace. 6. Shall we make collections weekly, to pay the preachers' board and expenses? This was not agreed to. We then inquired into the moral characters of the Preachers and Exhorters. Only one Exhorter was found any way doubtful, and we have great hopes of him. Brother Strawbridge received £8 quarterage; Brother King and myself £6 each. Great love subsisted among us in this meeting, and we parted in peace."

Some new names appear in this brief record; for by this time ten or twelve native Local Preachers and Exhorters had been licensed in Maryland, such as Richard Owen, William Watters, Richard Webster, Nathaniel

Perigau, Isaac Rollins, Hezekiah Bonham, Nicholas Watters, Sater Stephenson, J. Presbury, Phillip Gatch, and, probably, Aquila Standford and Abraham Rollins.[17]

Asbury began the new year, 1773, at Baltimore, as his head-quarters. On January 3d he writes: "I rode to Baltimore, and had a large congregation at the house of Captain Patten, at the Point. Many of the principal people were there, and the Lord enabled me to speak with power. At night I preached in town. The house was well filled, and we have a comfortable hope the work of the Lord will revive in this place. Bless the Lord, O ye saints! Holiness is the element of my soul. My earnest prayer is that nothing contrary to holiness may live in me." Still later he writes: "Many country people came to hear the word of God at the Point; some came twelve miles before those of the town had left their houses; perhaps before some of them had left their beds. I found some life and power in preaching, both at the Point and in Baltimore." He proceeded immediately to secure the foundations of Methodism in the city, for hitherto the Methodists there had met together only as "Societies," without "Classes." A local authority says: "The happiest event which could have occurred to Methodism in Baltimore, as well as to the cause of religion generally, was the arrival of Asbury in the fall of 1772, when he preached for the first time, in the morning at the Point, and in town at three o'clock in the afternoon, and at six o'clock in the evening. Down to this period there had been no disposition shown, on the part of the people, to open their houses for Methodist preaching, or to extend to the Preachers those hospitalities which are now so characteristic of Baltimore. It is true those Preachers who had preceded Asbury were allowed the

[17] Lednum, p. 86.

freedom of the place, but it was only to preach in the market-house, or at the corners of the streets, and to take lodgings at an inn, or retire to the country, which was their usual practice. But it was far otherwise in 1772: the good seed which had been sown by Strawbridge, Williams, and others, in the surrounding country, had been productive; while that scattered by King, Pilmoor, and Boardman was beginning to spring up in Baltimore, so that Asbury found a people prepared to his hands. Captain Patten, a friendly Irishman on the Point, was the first to offer his house for preaching, and soon after William Moore, in town, at the south-east corner of Water and South streets, and also Mrs. Triplett, a pious lady of the German Reformed Church, opened her three-story brick dwelling, corner of Baltimore-street and Triplett's Alley. These were filled with attentive hearers, that on the Point taking the lead. In a short time the place was found insufficient to accommodate the people who were anxious to receive the bread of life. A sail-loft, at the corner of Mills and Block streets, was provided free of charge, and was soon filled to overflowing, many coming from the country a distance of six miles, before some of the people of the town had risen from their beds. Something like a permanent arrangement being made for perpetuating Methodism in Baltimore, Asbury set about in good earnest to regulate the Societies by *settling*, as he says, the classes, and thereby giving to Methodism that form and consistency which it had in England; and no man knew better how to do this than he did. He had received a good training under the eye of Wesley, heartily sympathized with him in all his views in raising up a spiritual people, nor was he inferior to him in zeal, activity, and perseverance. Hitherto the Methodists in Baltimore had no responsible head, but

met together for prayer and mutual instruction without reference to numbers or time; having no one in particular to lead their devotions, and to give advice or reproof when needed. Asbury wanted *order* and *certainty;* and he knew full well that nothing could secure these but Methodist *rule.* Hence on the 3d of January, 1773, he says, after meeting the Society, 'I settled a class of men,' and on the following evening, after preaching with comfort, 'I formed a class of women.' He found it difficult at first to procure a suitable leader for the men, but not so for the women, and being partial to the Wesleyan plan in England, he appointed one of their own number over them as leader. The formation of these two classes, and the addition of others soon after, together with the difficulty of finding room for those who were willing to hear the word of God preached, made it necessary to provide other than mere private accommodation; and, accordingly, in November following, Asbury, assisted by Jesse Hollingsworth, George Wells, Richard Moale, George Robinson, and John Woodward, purchased the lot, sixty feet on Strawberry Alley, and seventy-five feet on Fleet-street, for a house of worship, where the church now stands—the only *original edifice* of the kind, of religious denomination, in Baltimore. The following year William Moore and Philip Rogers[18] took up two lots, and erected a church in Lovely Lane; Moore collecting £100 to assist in paying for it. Which of these two churches was first finished is not quite certain; tradition says the latter. The one in Strawberry Alley was commenced in November, 1773; that in Lovely Lane the 18th of April, 1774. Asbury, speaking of the latter, remarks, 'This day the foundation of our house in Baltimore was laid. Who could have expected that two men, one

[18] Both converted by Asbury's ministry.

among the chief of sinners, would ever have thus engaged in so great an undertaking for the cause of the blessed Jesus? This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. He hath moved them to this acceptable undertaking; and he will surely complete it, and raise up a people to serve him in this place!' Captain Webb, in writing to Asbury, then in New York, said that the church in Lovely Lane was so far finished by the middle of October that he preached in it."[19]

The first Methodist chapel in Baltimore, that of Strawberry Alley, was on Fell's Point, where the hospitable Irishman, Captain Patten, had been the first citizen to open his house for the preaching of Asbury; thereby adding another instance to the extraordinary services of his countrymen in the early history of the denomination. It was built of brick, forty-one feet and six inches in length and thirty feet in width, with a foundation of twenty inches. Its original entrance was at the south side, on Fleet-street; the gallery was at the north side, opposite the main entrance, and was for the use of the colored people. The pulpit was in the old style, tub fashion, and very high; while over the Preacher's head hung, suspended by a cord, the inevitable sounding-board. Back of the pulpit there was a semicircle of blue ground, on which was emblazoned in large gilt letters the motto, "Thou, God, seest me." It was built mainly through the untiring efforts of Asbury, who laid the foundation-stone, and was the first to offer the Gospel to the people from its pulpit. In 1801, when the Milk-street Church was built, the Strawberry Alley Church was given to the colored people, for their exclusive use and benefit.[20]

[19] Rev. Dr. Hamilton, in Meth. Quart. Rev., 1856, p. 449.
[20] Letter of Rev. Dr. Hamilton to the author.

Such was the beginning of that series of Methodist chapels in Baltimore, which has since increased so rapidly, that, in our day, they are more than double the number of those of any other communion, Protestant or Papal, in the city, and nearly a third of all its churches, though it has a larger supply of such edifices, in proportion to its population, than any other city on the continent.

Asbury continued, says the historian of Methodism, his itinerant labors "very extensively through the country, devoting all his time and attention to the work of the ministry. Nor did he labor in vain. Many sinners were brought to the knowledge of the truth, and new Societies were established in various places."[21]

His circuit, projecting from Baltimore, extended about two hundred miles; he traveled over it every three weeks:[22] it comprised about twenty-four appointments. He moved among them continually, assisted by King, Strawbridge, Owen, and other preachers and exhorters. On March 29, 1773, he writes, "I rode twenty miles to Susquehanna, and just got in, almost spent, time enough to preach at three o'clock. Hitherto the Lord hath helped me. Praised forever be his dear and blessed name! Tuesday 30. Our quarterly meeting began. After I had preached we proceeded to business; and in our little Conference the following queries were propounded, namely: 1. Are there no disorderly persons in our classes? It was thought not. 2. Does not dram-drinking too much prevail among our people? 3. Do none contract debts without due care to pay them? We found that this evil is much avoided among our people. 4. Are the band-meetings kept up? 5. Is there nothing immoral in any of our preachers? 6. What preachers

[21] Bangs, i, 77.

[22] Rev. Dr. Coggeshall's MS. Life of Asbury.

travel now? and where are they stationed? It was then urged that none must break our rules, under the penalty of being excluded from our connection. All was settled in the most amicable manner." Besides Strawbridge and Owen, King, Webster, Rollins, and "the whole body of exhorters and official members were present." Methodism had now taken deep root in Maryland, and quarterly meetings were becoming jubilatic occasions, attended by great crowds and extraordinary religious interest. The highways were thronged with carriages, and the proverbial hospitality of the Province was lavished upon the numerous attendants. Strawbridge and Asbury preached on this occasion, the former "a good and useful sermon," says Asbury, on Joel ii, 17, "Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar." "Many people were present at the love-feast, among whom were some strangers. All were deeply serious, and the power of God was present indeed." Owen preached a "very alarming sermon," and Strawbridge followed him with "a moving exhortation." "The whole ended in great peace," adds Asbury, "and we all went in the strength of the Lord to our several appointments."

He soon after departed to the North as far as New York, preaching along the whole route. He had received letters which occasioned him no little anxiety. The good men who were associated with him in the itinerancy had their infirmities; they were hardly competent to estimate his greatness of soul and the magnitude of his plans; and they demurred at his extreme, his almost military discipline. Wright had shown no little dissatisfaction. Pilmoor had written to him in severest terms. "Trouble is at hand," writes Asbury, "but I cannot fear while my heart is upright with God. I seek nothing but him,

and fear nothing but his displeasure." He had corresponded with Wesley respecting the state of the Societies and the necessity of more thorough discipline and increased laborers. It was obvious that a new administration, uncompromised by any American antecedents, had become expedient. Asbury urged Wesley to come over himself, but he could not. He determined, however, to send a man of rigorous disciplinary habits as assistant or superintendent. Asbury was to be relieved of that responsibility, but only temporarily. He was destined soon to attain a supreme and permanent authority, which should enable him to fashion the whole American denomination according to his own gigantic views.

Meanwhile Captain Webb had gone to England to appeal again to Wesley for help, and was now returning on the ocean with his recruits.

CHAPTER VI.

WESLEY'S AMERICAN MISSIONARIES.

Captain Webb Recruiting the American Itinerancy — Charles Wesley Opposes him — Webb Appeals to the Conference — Thomas Rankin and George Shadford — Rankin's Early Life — Methodism in the British Army — Whitefield — Rankin's Conversion — He becomes a Preacher — His Success — His Appointment to America — George Shadford's Early Life — His Conversion — His Usefulness — He joins Wesley's Itinerancy — Hears Captain Webb's Appeal at Leeds, and Departs for America — Wesley's Letter to him — Scenes of the Voyage — Arrival at Philadelphia — Rankin's Invocation — Rankin and Asbury in New York — Rankin in John-street Church — Shadford in New Jersey.

The veteran Captain Webb having labored about six years, the principal founder of Methodism from New York to Baltimore, returned again to England in 1772 to appeal to Wesley and his Conference for more missionaries. Wesley this year wrote to a friend in Ireland, "Captain Webb is now in Dublin: invite him to Limerick. He is a man of fire, and the power of God constantly attends his word." It was in the same year also that Wesley heard him with "admiration" in the Old Foundry, London. "He was all life and fire." He was the right man to appeal to British Methodism for America, for he could tell his own story about it, and his military ardor gave a singular inspiration to his words. He made vast calculations for American Methodism, and the timid Charles Wesley gazed at him with surprise, pronouncing him fanatical; but it was next to impossible to exaggerate the moral and social prospects

of the new world. He demanded two of the ablest men of the British Conference, Christopher Hopper and Joseph Benson. Charles Wesley opposed the claim; but the zealous captain was not to be altogether defeated. He went to the Conference, which began on August 4, 1772, at Leeds, a city which was thus again to be distinguished in the missionary annals of the denomination. He there addressed the preachers with an eloquence that kindled the assembly into enthusiasm. George Shadford heard him, and says, "I went to the Leeds Conference, where I first saw Captain Webb. When he warmly exhorted preachers to go to America I felt my spirit stirred within me to go; more especially when I understood that many hundreds of precious souls were perishing through lack of knowledge, scattered up and down in various parts of the country, and had none to warn them of their danger. When I considered that we had in England many men of grace and gifts far superior to mine, but few seemed to offer themselves willingly, I saw my call the more clearly. Accordingly Mr. Rankin and I offered ourselves to go the spring following."[1]

Thomas Rankin was one of the commanding men of the Wesleyan ministry. Wesley appointed him at once General Assistant or Superintendent of the American Societies, for he was not only Asbury's senior in the itinerancy, but was an experienced disciplinarian; and Wesley judged him competent to manage the difficulties which had arisen under the administration of Asbury, as represented in the correspondence of the latter. Asbury had probably asked to be relieved by such a successor, and welcomed him with sincere gratification.

Rankin, at the instance of Wesley, has left us records

[1] Meth. Mag., London, 1816, p. 645.

of his life,[2] which reveal an interesting character. He was a clear-headed and honest-hearted Scotchman; trained in his infancy to strict religious habits; with domestic catechetical instruction by his father, which was accompanied, however, with lessons in music and dancing that tended, he says, to "obliterate the good impressions that from time to time had affected my mind." "But," he adds, "I bless God that I was mercifully preserved from open wickedness. I do not know that ever I swore an oath in my life; indeed, I felt an entire abhorrence of this vice, and I also detested it in others." When about seventeen years old the death of his upright father deepened much his interest in religion.

One of the most extraordinary episodes in the history of British Methodism was its outbreak in 1745, under the labors of John Haime, in the army in Flanders; achieving, in camps and on battle-fields, the moral miracles which it had effected among the miners of Cornwall, Kingswood, and Newcastle, and raising up Societies and preachers, some of whom afterward became eminent in the itinerant ministry.[3] The converted troops, returning to England, laid in several places the foundations of Churches. They formed a Society in Dunbar, Scotland, and there Thomas Rankin first learned the peculiar doctrines of the denomination. Methodist itinerants soon reached the town; he revolted at their urgent preaching, but could not escape the convictions of the truths he learned from them. Whitefield, flying over the realm, came across his path at Edinburgh. "I heard him," he writes, "with wonder and surprise, and had such a dis-

[2] Wesley induced his most useful preachers to write autobiographies for his Arminian Magazine. Rankin's is given in 1779. He afterward enlarged it. See Jackson's "Lives of Early Methodist Preachers," vol. iii. London, 1838.

[3] See Hist. of the Rel. Movement, etc., i, 229.

covery of the plan of salvation as I had never known before. I remembered more of that sermon than of all the sermons I ever had heard. From this time I was truly convinced of the necessity of a change of heart. I now sought the knowledge of salvation with my whole heart. I most sincerely desired to devote my soul and body to the glory of God; when I was, all on a sudden, left in darkness. I began to examine myself, if I had given way to any known sin or neglected any known duty. So far as I had light to discern, I knew not that I had done anything to cause the amazing change I now experienced. What to do, or where to go, I could not tell. I thought, 'The way of duty is the way of safety, and here will I hold.' Whether from pride or prudence I cannot say, but I remained silent, and my sufferings were not small. The Lord knew that it was not a little that would break a headstrong will and bow a high, proud spirit, and therefore I had cup after cup given me to drink, in order to embitter everything that had opposed or might oppose my salvation by grace alone. I mingled my food with weeping, and my complaints with groans that could not be uttered. 'I bless thee for the most severe, and let this stand the foremost, that my heart has bled.'"

Whitefield again meets him; the "word is precious to him," but his anxiety deepens. "It then was suggested to me," he continues, "'probably you are not one of the elect, and you may seek and seek in vain.' I tasted no pleasant food; my sleep departed from me, and my flesh wasted from my bones; till at last I sunk into despair. One morning, after breakfast, I arose and went into the garden, and sat down in a retired place, to mourn over my sad condition. I began to wrestle with God in an agony of prayer. I called out, 'Lord, I have wrestled

long, and have not yet prevailed: O let me now prevail!' The whole passage of Jacob's wrestling with the angel came into my mind; and I called out aloud, 'I will not let thee go, unless thou bless me!' In a moment the cloud burst, and tears of love flowed from my eyes, when these words were applied to my soul many times over, 'And he blessed him there.' They came with the Holy Ghost, and with much assurance; and my whole soul was overwhelmed in the presence of God. I could declare that the Son of man still had power on earth to forgive sins, and that he had pardoned my sins, even mine. How many times before, under the most painful distress of mind, I had wished I had never been born! But now I could bless God that I ever had a being, and fully believed that I should live with God while eternal ages roll. Soon after, I was sent for by a lady, who, observing that I had been in tears, inquired what was the matter. I told her they were not tears of sorrow, they were tears of joy; and then related to her what the Lord had done for my soul. She burst into tears herself, and told me she had been seeking that great blessing for years, but had not found it. She was so deeply affected with what I told her, and by the power that attended the word, that it was some time before she could inform me of the business she wished to consult me upon. I have reason to believe it was made an eternal blessing to her soul."

Such was the usual, it may almost be said the uniform, spiritual history of Methodist Preachers, and it is the true explanation of their extraordinary ministerial history.

He was now living in Edinburgh; there were no Methodists there, but some of John Haime's dragoons were in garrison at Musselborough, six miles distant; they had formed a Society among the townsmen, and Rankin went

thither, for he had in fine become a Methodist. He heard Wesley, and Alexander Mather of notable memory; his heart cleaved to the latter. "I never saw," he says, "any one before that appeared so dead to all below, and so much alive to God, as also so deeply engaged in his work. I embraced every opportunity of his company and conversation. I was with him at Musselborough, and stood before him when he preached out of doors, and he leaned on my shoulders, which I thought a very great honor, although I did not admire the appearance of some who were preparing to throw dirt at him. I had not learned then what it was to go through showers of dirt, stones, and rotten eggs, which I experienced several years afterward." Another notable itinerant of that day induced him to exhort in public. Soon after, he records remarkable exercises of mind, inward conflicts, alternations of joy and sorrow. "I had such a discovery of the dreadful state of all the human race, (who were without God, and without hope in the world,) that my knees smote together, and every joint trembled, while these words sounded in my ears, 'Whom shall I send? whom shall I send?' My heart replied, 'Lord, if I can be of any use, to pluck one of these from the jaws of ruin, here I am, send me.' At that moment I felt such love for the souls of my fellow-creatures as I never had done since I knew the pardoning love of God." "Such," he adds, "were my feelings that I thought I could lay down my life if I might but be instrumental in saving one soul from everlasting ruin."

It was not long before he was laboring as a local preacher. Wesley called him into the itinerancy in 1761, and sent him to the Sussex Circuit. Remarkable success attended his preaching all around it. A Curate of the

Establishment was one of his converts, and became "a burning and a shining light, in connection with Mr. Wesley, till called to his eternal reward." The next year he spent, with John Nelson, on Devonshire Circuit; he could not have been placed under better training. It was soon evident that he had become one of the most indefatigable and most successful of Wesley's itinerants. "Revivals" attended his preaching almost everywhere; he governed skillfully his societies; he worked day and night, and encountered opposition with good Scotch courage and adroitness. Wesley had tried him thoroughly through about ten years when Captain Webb appeared to claim him for America. "I had made it," writes Rankin, "matter of much prayer, and it appeared to me that the way was opening for me to go. When the work in America came before the Conference, Mr. Wesley determined to appoint me superintendent of the whole, and I chose my much-esteemed friend and brother Shadford to accompany me. I had proved his uprightness, piety, and usefulness in several circuits where he had labored with me, and I knew I could depend upon him. It was settled that we should sail in the spring, and in the mean time, that I should labor in the York Circuit. I went accordingly, and remained in those parts from the Conference till about the latter end of March. During the time I spent in this Circuit, I considered deeply and with much prayer the importance of the work which lay before me. It had dwelt upon my mind, more or less, for some years; and the nearer the period arrived, the greater it appeared to me. The thoughts of leaving Mr. Wesley, as well as my brethren, whose counsel and advice were always at hand, and ready on every trying occasion, was no small exercise to my mind. I was about to bid adieu

to my relatives, and to one whom I loved as my own soul, and who afterward was my partner in life for nineteen years; but the consideration of the work of God swallowed up every other concern. I rode to Birmingham to receive my last instructions from Mr. Wesley. The interview was pleasing and affecting, as well as instructive; I hope to remember it to my latest breath."

George Shadford is one of the most interesting characters in the autobiographical sketches of Wesley's old Arminian Magazine.[4] He tells his story with an honest directness, an Augustinian contrition and frankness, and, withal, a naivete and dramatic effectiveness which render it irresistibly entertaining. It presents in some respects quite a contrast with that of Rankin. Like the latter, he had a somewhat strict early religious training, but was ebullient with the spirits of healthful childhood, and, having a conscience more tender but less strong than that of Rankin, he was continually indulging in pranks of childish mischief, and as continually repenting of them as guilty and perilous to his soul. He had sufficient points of both similarity and contrast with Rankin to account for the fond partiality which led the latter to prefer him as his companion in the mission to America. He was altogether a loveable and admirable man. "When I was very young," he says, "I was uncommonly afraid of death. At about eight or nine years of age, being very ill of a sore throat, and likely to die, I was awfully afraid of another world; for I felt my heart very wicked, and my conscience smote me for many things that I had done amiss. As I grew up I was very prone to speak bad words, and often to perform wicked actions; to break the Sabbath, and, being fond of play, took every

[4] See his biography in Jackson, vol. iii.

opportunity on Sunday to steal away from my father. In the forenoon, indeed, he always made me go to church with him; and when dinner was over, he made me and my sister read a chapter or two in the Bible, and charged me not to play in the afternoon; but, notwithstanding all he said, if any person came in to talk with him, I took that opportunity to steal away, and he saw me not till evening, when he called me to an account. My mother insisted on my saying my prayers every night and morning, at least; and sent me to be catechised by the minister every Sunday. At fourteen years of age my parents sent me to the bishop to be confirmed, and at sixteen they desired me to prepare to receive the blessed sacrament. For about a month before it I retired from all vain company, prayed, and read alone, while the Spirit of God set home what I read to my heart. I wept much in secret, was ashamed of my past life, and thought I would never spend my time on Sundays as I had done. When I approached the table of the Lord it appeared so awful to me that I was likely to fall down as if I were going to the judgment-seat of Christ. However, very soon my heart was melted like wax before the fire. I broke off from all my companions, and retired to read on the Lord's day; sometimes into my chamber, at other times into the field; but very frequently into the churchyard, near which my father lived. I have spent among the graves two or three hours at a time, sometimes reading, and sometimes praying, until my mind seemed transported in tasting the powers of the world to come; so that I verily believe, had I been acquainted with the Methodists at that time, I should have soon found remission of sins, and peace with God. But I had not a single companion that feared God. Nay, I believe at that time the whole town was covered with darkness, and sat in

the shadow of death. Having none to guide or direct me, the devil soon persuaded me to take more liberty, and suggested that I had repented and reformed enough; that there was no need to be always so precise; that there were no young people in the town who did as I did. I gave way to this fatal device of Satan, and, by little and little, lost all my good desires and resolutions, and soon became weak as in times past. I was fond of wrestling, running, leaping, football, dancing, and such like sports; and I gloried in them because I could excel most in the town and parish. At the age of twenty I was so active that I seemed a compound of life and fire, and had such a flow of animal spirits that I was never in my element but when employed in such kind of sports."

A new Militia Act placed four of his fellow-youth in the army. One of them was "much afraid to go." Shadford liked soldiering, and went in his stead for seven guineas. His father was "almost distracted" with grief; but the tender-hearted boy, finding afterward his parent in pecuniary distress, gave him all the money he had received. He was tossed about the country in the army, tempted by the vices of his comrades, but escaping most of them, and repenting with tears when overcome. "I well remember one day," he writes, "when being exceedingly provoked by one of my comrades, I swore at him two bitter oaths, by the name of God; a practice I had not been guilty of. Immediately I was, as it were, stabbed to the heart by a sword. I was sensible I had grievously sinned against God, and stopped directly. I believe I never swore another oath afterward."

At Gainsborough he went with a sergeant to hear a Methodist preach in a hall. He was exceedingly enter-

tained and surprised at the services, and deeply smitten in his conscience by the discourse. "I was tried, cast, and condemned," he adds. "I then made a vow to Almighty God, that if he would spare me until that time twelvemonth, (at which time I should be at liberty from the militia, and intended to return home,) I would then serve him. So I resolved to venture another year in the old way, damned or saved. O what a mercy that I am not in hell! that God did not take me at my word and cut me off immediately!" "In Kent," he says, "the Lord arrested me again with strong convictions, so that I was obliged to leave my comrades at noonday, and, running up into my chamber, I threw myself upon my knees and wept bitterly. I thought, 'sin, cursed sin, will be my ruin!' I was ready to tear the very hair from my head, thinking I must perish at last, and that my sins would sink me lower than the grave." "Wherever I traveled I found the Methodists were spoken against by wicked and ungodly persons of every denomination; and the more I looked into the Bible the more I was convinced that they were the people of God."

On his release from the militia service he returned home, musing much about this "sect everywhere spoken against." Of course he was a favorite among his early associates; they welcomed him with delight, and got up a dance to express their joy. "Though I was not fond of this," he says, "yet to oblige them I complied, much against my conscience. We danced until break of day, and as I was walking from the tavern to my father's house (about a hundred yards) a thought came to my mind, 'What have I been doing this night? serving the devil.' I considered what it had cost me; and upon the whole, I thought, 'The ways of the devil are more expensive than the ways of the Lord. It will cost a man

more to damn his soul than to save it.' I had not walked many steps further before something spoke to my heart, 'Remember thy promise.' Immediately it came strongly into my mind, 'It is now a year ago since that promise was made. "If thou wilt spare me until I get home, I will serve thee."' Then that passage of Solomon came to my mind, 'When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that thou vowest.' I thought, 'I will. I will serve the devil no more.' But then it was suggested to my soul, 'Stay another year, until thou art married and settled in the world, and then thou mayest be religious.' That was directly followed with, 'If I do, God will surely cut me off, and send my soul to hell, after so solemn a vow made.' From that time I never danced more, but immediately began to seek happiness in God."

A Methodist farmer moved into the neighborhood, and opened his house for preaching. Shadford could not stay away. "I was now determined," he says, "to seek God, and therefore I went constantly to church and sacrament, and to hear the Methodist preachers, to pray, and read the Scriptures. I thought, 'I will be good. I am determined to be good.' I read at night different prayers. Sometimes I prayed for humility or meekness, at other times for faith, patience, or chastity; whatever I thought I wanted most. I was thus employed, when the family were in bed, for hours together. And many times while reading the tears ran from my eyes, so that I could read no further; and when I found my heart softened and could open it to Almighty God, there seemed a secret pleasure in repentance itself; with a hope springing up that God would save me. While I was thus employed in seeking the Lord, drawn by the

Spirit of God, I esteemed it more than my necessary food."

"But," he adds, "the Lord did not suffer me to take conviction for conversion. After those pleasant drawings, I had sorrow and deep distress. My sins pressed me sore, and the hand of the Lord was very heavy upon me. Thus I continued until Sunday, May 5, 1762, coming out of church, the farmer that received the preachers told me a stranger was to preach at his house. I went to hear him, and was pleased and much affected. He gave notice that he would preach again in the evening. In the mean time I persuaded as many neighbors as I could to go. We had a full house, and several were greatly affected while he published his crucified Master. Toward the latter part of the sermon I trembled, I shook, I wept. I thought, 'I cannot stand it; I shall fall down amid all this people.' O how gladly would I have been alone to weep! for I was tempted with shame. I stood guilty and condemned, like the publican in the temple. I cried out, (so that others heard,) being pierced to the heart with the sword of the Spirit, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' No sooner had I expressed these words, but by the eye of faith (not with my bodily eyes) I saw Christ my Advocate, at the right hand of God, making intercession for me. I believed he loved me, and gave himself for me. In an instant the Lord filled my soul with divine love, as quick as lightning. Immediately my eyes flowed with tears, and my heart with love. Tears of joy and sorrow ran down my cheeks. O what sweet distress was this! I seemed as if I could weep my life away in tears of love. I sat down in a chair, for I could stand no longer, and these words ran through my mind twenty times over: 'Marvelous are thy works, and that my soul knoweth right well.' As I walked home along

the streets I seemed to be in paradise. When I read my Bible, it seemed an entirely new book. When I meditated on God and Christ, angels or spirits; when I considered good or bad men, any or all the creatures that surrounded me; everything appeared new, and stood in a new relation to me. I was in Christ a new creature; old things were done away, and all things then became new. I lay down at night in peace with a thankful heart, because the Lord hath redeemed me, and given me peace with God and all mankind. But no sooner had I peace within than the devil and wicked men began to roar without, and pour forth floods of lies and scandal in order to drown the young child. And no marvel, for the devil had lost one of the main pillars of his kingdom in that parish; and therefore he did not leave a stone unturned, that he might cast odium upon the work of God in that place. But none of these things moved me, for I was happy in my God, clothed, with the sun, and the moon under my feet; raised up, and made to sit in heavenly, holy, happy places in Christ Jesus. In a fortnight after I joined the Society."

Thus had George Shadford become a Methodist, and now his filial heart turned toward his aged parents. He proposed to them family worship, and after his first prayer "they all wept over one another." He continued the domestic devotions for half a year. "My father," he writes, "at length began to be in deep distress. I have listened and heard him in private crying for mercy, like David out of the horrible pit and mire and clay, 'O Lord, deliver my soul!' I began to reprove, and warn others wherever I went. My father was sometimes afraid if I reproved the customers who came to our shop it would give offense, and we should lose all our business. Upon which I said, 'Father, let us trust

God for once with all our concerns, and let us do this in the way of our duty, from a right principle, and if he deceives us we will never trust him more; for none that ever trusted the Lord were confounded.' In less than a twelvemonth, instead of losing, we had more business than ever we had before. The Society increased from twelve to forty members in a short time, for the Lord gave me several of my companions in sin to walk with me in the ways of holiness."

He was soon exhorting friends, neighbors, enemies, and whosoever came in his way to "flee from the wrath to come." After one of his exhortations he returned home and found his father reading in the Psalms of David. "I saw," he says, "the tears running down his cheeks; yet there appeared a joy in his countenance. I said, 'Pray, father, what now? What now? What is the matter?' He instantly answered, 'I have found Christ; I have found Christ at last. Upward of sixty years I have lived without him in the world in sin and ignorance. I have been all the day idle and entered not into his vineyard till the eleventh hour. O how merciful was he to spare me, and hire me at last! He hath set my soul at liberty. O praise the Lord! Praise the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!' I left him rejoicing in God his Saviour, and retired to praise God for answering my prayers." His mother was quickly added to the list of his converts, then his sister; four of his family were converted in less than a year, and the little Society of the town grew vigorous by his humble labors.

Shadford became a Local Preacher. Wesley met him and summoned him into the itinerant field. In 1768 he was sent into Cornwall, the next year to Kent, and the next to Norwich. In 1772 he heard Webb's appeal for

America in the Leeds Conference, and his "spirit was stirred within him to go." He was appointed to Wiltshire circuit till the ensuing spring, when he was to embark with Rankin. As the time drew near Wesley sent him a characteristic letter, for he loved the young itinerant as a son. "Dear George," he wrote, "the time has arrived for you to embark for America. You must go down to Bristol, where you will meet with Thomas Rankin, Captain Webb, and his wife. I let you loose, George, on the great continent of America. Publish your message in the open face of the sun, and do all the good you can. I am, dear George, yours affectionately." When he reached the wharf where the ship lay he was reminded of a dream which he had six years before, and in which a written message seemed sent him from heaven, requiring him "to go and preach the Gospel in a foreign land." "I thought I was conveyed to the place where the ship lay, in which I was to embark in an instant. The wharf and ship appeared as plain to me as if I were awake. I replied, 'Lord, I am willing to go in thy name, but I am afraid a people of different nations and languages will not understand me.' An answer to this was given: 'Fear not, for I am with thee.' I awoke, awfully impressed with the presence of God, and was really full of divine love; and a relish of it remained upon my spirit for many days. I could not tell what this meant, and revolved these things in my mind for a long time. But when I came to Peel, and saw the ship and wharf, then all came fresh to my mind." He now looked upon the ship and the whole scene before him as the realization of his vision, and took courage for his mission.

Captain Webb and his wife were on the deck, and had made all necessary provisions for the little band. On

Good Friday, April 9, 1773, accompanied by Joseph Yearbry (another preacher) and other passengers, they set sail. Both the missionaries and Webb kept up daily prayers, and preached often on the voyage with much effect. "The Lord was in the midst of us," writes Rankin, "and attended our meetings with power from on high." Webb especially seemed to enjoy with zest these devotions, for he could not fail to feel that his errand had been successful. Rankin's Journal repeatedly records that "Captain Webb exhorted, and was attended with the divine blessing; the word seemed to lay hold on some hearts, and they began to show it by their tears." On the 18th they had a special day. Prayers were read by Rankin, an exhortation delivered by Webb, a sermon from the quarter-deck by Shadford; the evening was spent in exhortation, singing, and prayer. "We were led out," says Rankin, "in earnest prayer for our friends and Christian brethren in England, as also that God would open a great and an effectual door for the spreading of his Gospel among those to whom his mercy and providence were now sending us. Indeed, we felt the gracious influence of the divine presence so among us that we could scarce conclude. The Lord did indeed open the windows of heaven, and the skies poured down righteousness."

On the 1st of June they came to anchor in the Delaware, "opposite Chester, about sixteen miles south of Philadelphia," after a passage of seven and a half weeks. On the 3d they were cordially received by Asbury and the Methodists of the city; "and now," wrote Rankin, "as I am by the providence of God called to labor for a season on this continent, do thou, O Holy One of Israel, stand by thy weak and ignorant servant! Show thyself glorious in power and in divine majesty. Let thine arm

be made bare, and stretched out to save, so that wonders and signs may be done in the name of thy holy child Jesus."

Asbury had been anxiously expecting them; "they have arrived," he writes, "to my great comfort." Rankin preached that night on an appropriate text, "I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it." Asbury wrote, after the discourse, "He will not be admired as a Preacher; but as a disciplinarian he will fill his place." He probably changed his opinion of Rankin's preaching, for on hearing him again he writes that he "dispensed the truth with power. It reached the hearts of many, and they appeared to be much quickened." Watters, the first native itinerant, says he "was not only a man of grace, but of strong and quick parts."[5] On Saturday, 12th, accompanied by Asbury, they reached New York city, and were met by many Methodists on the dock where they landed. The next day Rankin was present to hear Asbury preach at seven o'clock in the morning, at John-street, on a text appropriate as a salutatory welcome, Ruth ii, 4, "Behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee." "During the service," says Rankin, anxious if not depressed, "I was led to reflect on the motives which induced me to leave my native land, and Christian friends and brethren, and cross the Atlantic Ocean, to a land and people unknown. I could appeal to God with the utmost sincerity of heart; I had only one thing in view, his glory, the salvation of souls, connected with my own. In a moment the cloud broke and the power of God rested upon my soul, and all gloom fled away, as morning shades before the rising sun. I had then faith

[5] Watters's Life, p. 35.

to believe that I should see his glory as I had seen it in the sanctuary." Rankin preached in the evening and afterward met the Society. "The Lord," he says, "was in the midst, as a flame of fire among dry stubble. Great was our rejoicing in the God of our salvation. Blessed be God, sorrow may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning! This has indeed been a day of the Son of man both to my own soul and the souls of many others. The praise, O Lord, will I ascribe unto thee!" He thus successfully began his career in the new world. Captain Webb passed up the Hudson, and Asbury went forth over his old New York circuit exclaiming "Glory to God! he blesses me with the graces and comforts of his spirit in my soul!"

Shadford had hastened from Philadelphia to New Jersey. He "labored there," he says, "with success for a month, adding thirty-five to the society, many of whom were much comforted with the presence of the Lord."

By the middle of July the scattered itinerants were gathering at Philadelphia; an important event was about to occur there, the first American Methodist Conference.

CHAPTER VII.

FIRST CONFERENCE — RETURN OF ENGLISH PREACHERS.

First American Methodist Conference — Its Members — Statistics — Laxity of Discipline — Proceedings of the Conference — The Sacramental Controversy — Robert Strawbridge steadfast to the American Claim — Its Result — Germ of the "Book Concern" — Appointments — Return of Pilmoor and Boardman — Further traces of Boardman — His Death — Further traces of Pilmoor — He leaves the Denomination — Retains his interest for it — Richard Wright returns to England — Final traces of Captain Webb — His Death.

The first American Methodist Conference began its session in Philadelphia on Wednesday the 14th, and closed on Friday, the 16th of July, 1773.[1] Rankin says, "there were present seven Preachers, besides Boardman and Pilmoor, who were to return to England." Asbury, detained on his New York Circuit, did not appear till the second day of the session; he was the tenth member, making the number the same as at Wesley's first Conference in England, held twenty-nine years before. The members of this first American Conference were all Europeans; they were Thomas Rankin, Richard Boardman, Joseph Pilmoor, Francis Asbury, Richard Wright,

[1] Asbury's Journals, i, p. 80. Compare Rankin's Journals, in Jackson's Early Methodist Preachers, iii, p. 62. These references settle the question of the date of this Conference. It is surprising how many errors have appeared in our records respecting so important an event. "All agree as to the year 1773, but in the month and day differ. The History of the M. E. Church, by Bangs, says July 4; but July 4, 1773, was Sunday, and no Conference that I know of ever began on that day Smith's History of Wesleyan Methodism says July 4; Life of William Watters, the first American Preacher, says June; Wakeley's Lost Chapters, July 16."—*Letter of P. D. Myers, of Philadelphia, to the author.*

George Shadford, Thomas Webb, John King, Abraham Whitworth, and Joseph Yearbry[2] who had accompanied Rankin and Shadford from England.

The first reports of members in Society were made to this Conference: they were 180 in New York, 180 in Philadelphia, 200 in New Jersey, 500 in Maryland, 100 in Virginia; nearly half were therefore in Maryland, the most fruitful soil that the denomination has found in the country. The aggregate returns were 1,160. Rankin was disappointed; he expected to find a larger numerical strength in American Methodism. These, however, were only its members of classes; there were many more adherents who considered themselves members of its Societies. The preachers had formed Societies without classes; the exact discipline of English Methodism had not, in fact, been yet fully introduced into America. Asbury labored hard to conform the American Societies to Wesley's model, but had met with no little resistance from both the preachers and laymen; Rankin had been sent out for this purpose, and to these two thorough disciplinarians we owe the effective organization of the incipient Methodism of the new world. Without them it seems probable that it would have adopted a settled pastorate, and become blended with the Anglican Church of the colonies, or, like the fruits of Whitefield's labors, been absorbed in the general Protestantism of the country. Rankin complained at the Conference of the prevailing laxity of discipline. "Some," he writes, "of the above number I found afterward were not closely united to us. Indeed, our discipline was not properly attended to, except at Philadelphia and New York; and even in those places it was upon the decline. Nevertheless, from the accounts I heard, there was a real foundation laid of doing

[2] Lednum, p. 111.

much good, and we hoped to see greater things than these. The Preachers were stationed in the best manner we could, and we parted in love, and also with a full resolution to spread genuine Methodism in public and private with all our might."

The proceedings of the session had direct reference to the establishment of the genuine Wesleyan Discipline as the only guarantee of Methodism in the country. The published report of these proceedings forms but one page of those annual "Minutes," which have swollen, by our day, into ten stout octavo volumes. It consists of the following questions, answers, and appointments, besides the returns of members already cited.

"The following queries were proposed to every Preacher:

"1. Ought not the authority of Mr. Wesley and that Conference to extend to the Preachers and people in America as well as in Great Britain and Ireland? Yes.

"2. Ought not the doctrine and Discipline of the Methodists, as contained in the Minutes, to be the sole rule of our conduct, who labor in the connection with Mr. Wesley in America? Yes.

"3. If so, does it not follow that if any Preachers deviate from the Minutes we can have no fellowship with them till they change their conduct? Yes.

"The following rules were agreed to by all the Preachers present:

"1. Every Preacher who acts in connection with Mr. Wesley and the brethren who labor in America is strictly to avoid administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper.

"2. All the people among whom we labor to be earnestly exhorted to attend the Church, and to receive the ordinances there; but in a particular manner to press

the people in Maryland and Virginia to the observance of this minute.

"3. No person or persons to be admitted in our love-feasts oftener than twice or thrice, unless they become members; and none to be admitted to the Society meetings more than thrice.

"4. None of the Preachers in America to reprint any of Mr. Wesley's books without his authority (when it can be gotten) and the consent of their brethren.

"5. Robert Williams to sell the books he has already printed, but to print no more unless under the above restrictions.

"6. Every Preacher who acts as an assistant, to send an account of the work once in six months to the general assistant."[3]

Asbury, arriving on the second day of the session, hints at the anti-Wesleyan tendencies of the times by saying that he "did not find such harmony" on that day "as he could wish for," and concludes his notice of the proceedings with the remark that "there were some debates among the preachers in this Conference relative to the conduct of some who had manifested a desire to abide in the cities and live like gentlemen. Three years out of four have been already spent in the cities. It was also found that money had been wasted, improper leaders appointed, and many of our rules broken."

Wesley, being thoroughly loyal to the Established Church of England, had trained his people to humble submission to its arrogant policy toward them; Rankin enforced a like submission in this country, as the English Church was still recognized here in some of the colonies, particularly in Maryland and Virginia, where it was

[3] Minutes of the Annual Conferences of the M. E. Church, vol. i, p. 5. New York. 1840.

established by law; hence the rules numbered first and second. But the Revolution was already looming over the country. The English clergy were deserting it; and many that remained were of very questionable moral character. A great proportion of the colonists had no traditional attachment to the Anglican Church; the submissive policy of Wesley in England was therefore irrelevant in America. He was too distant to perceive the fact; and his representatives were too Anglican to recognize it, but many of the American Methodists, and some of their Preachers, were wiser. They insisted upon their right to the sacraments from their own Pastors. Theoretically none of us, now, can dispute their claim; practically Wesley himself conceded it, after the additional and decisive argument of the Revolution, by constituting them an independent Church, with full powers to consecrate the sacraments. The men who then seemed radical, in this respect, were so, simply, because they had a superior foresight of the predestined importance and needs of American Methodism. Robert Strawbridge, as we have seen, contended sturdily for the right of the people to the sacraments, and could not be deterred by Asbury or Rankin from administering them. He had founded the Church in the regions whence now nearly one half of its members were reported; he had administered to them the sacraments before any English itinerants appeared in the country, and being an Irishman, he shared not in the deferential sympathies of his English brethren for the Establishment; as for any other sentiments, the actual character of the representatives of the Establishment, clerical and lay, around him, could claim none from him but pity or contempt. Its clergy were known chiefly as the heartiest card-players, horse-racers, and drinkers of the middle colonies. Robert Strawbridge

was doubtless imprudent in the Irish resolution with which he resisted the policy of the English itinerants; for the intuitive foresight with which he anticipated the necessity of the independent administration of the sacraments, should have suggested to him the certainty of their concession in due time, and therefore the expediency of patient harmony in the infant Church till that time should come. Discord was extremely perilous at this early stage of the denomination. He was firm, however; and though the first "rule" adopted by this Conference seems absolute, yet we learn from Asbury that it was adopted with the understanding that "no preacher in our connection shall be permitted to administer the ordinances at this time except Mr. Strawbridge, and he under the particular direction of the assistant." A concession so singular shows the extraordinary consideration in which Strawbridge was held, the influence he had obtained over the Societies of Maryland and Virginia, perhaps also the conscious necessity of the independent administration of the sacraments in that chief field of the denomination. As we shall hereafter see, this just claim of American Methodism could not be effectually refused; it led to increasing contention, and at last, providentially, gave birth to the organization of the "Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America."

The allusion to Robert Williams and his books, though brief, is full of significance; it foreshadows the "Methodist Book Concern," in our times one of the most potent arms of the Church. A cotemporary historian says that "Previous to the formation of this rule, Robert Williams, one of the Preachers, had reprinted many of Mr. Wesley's books, and had spread them through the country, to the great advantage of religion. The sermons, which he printed in small pamphlets, had a very good effect, and

gave the people great light and understanding in the nature of the new birth and in the plan of salvation; and withal, they opened the way in many places for our preachers to be invited to preach where they had never been before. But, notwithstanding the good that had been done by the circulation of the books, it now became necessary for all the preachers to be united in the same course of printing and selling our books, so that the profits arising therefrom might be divided among them or applied to some charitable purpose."[4] The zealous Robert Williams had then, by his humble pamphlets, done a good work and provoked a better.

"We parted in love," writes Rankin. The first differences of opinion noticed by Asbury seem to have yielded to a unanimous sense of the importance of harmony.

The appointments for the ensuing ecclesiastical year were, New York, Thomas Rankin, and Philadelphia, George Shadford, to exchange in four months; New Jersey, John King, William Watters; Baltimore, Francis Asbury, Robert Strawbridge, Abraham Whitworth, Joseph Yearbry; Norfolk, Richard Wright; Petersburg, Robert Williams.

Boardman and Pilmoor do not appear in this list, though they continued in the country nearly six months. They had labored in it about four years, New York and Philadelphia being their head-quarters. Without intermeddling with the rife political questions of the times, they were loyal, as Englishmen, to the parent government; and when they saw the terrible certainty of war, they quietly retired from the country, embarking together for England on Sunday, the 2d of January, 1774, "after commending the Americans to God." They left 2,073 members in the Societies, 10 regularly organized circuits, and 17 Preachers.

[4] Lee, p. 48.

Boardman immediately resumed his ministerial travels in Ireland, laboring on the Londonderry, Cork, Athlone, and Limerick Circuits, from 1774 to 1780. In the latter year he was appointed to London with Charles Wesley, Dr. Coke, and other leading preachers. In 1781 he returned to Ireland and traveled Limerick Circuit. The next year he was appointed to Cork, where he died in 1782. In the old Arminian Magazine for 1795 we have "The Experience of Mr. Zachariah Yewdall," a humble itinerant, who was Boardman's colleague on the Cork Circuit. It records that "Mr. Boardman tarried at Limerick till the end of September, and then came to Cork, where he had labored before, and was universally known and beloved by the people, who were anxious for his coming, and in great expectation that his ministry would be successful. On the Sabbath morning after his arrival he preached from Job xiii, 15: 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;' but was not able to preach in the evening. The physician made light of the disorder, though there were evident symptoms of an approaching apoplexy, so that no means were made use of to prevent what soon happened. Being some better the next day, he continued to preach every evening as usual till Friday, when he attended the Intercession at noon. He was observed to pray with uncommon fervor for the success of the Gospel, and for his brethren in the ministry. After the meeting he went to a friend's house in the city; as soon as he got there he lost the use of his speech, and with some difficulty was conveyed to his lodgings in a chaise.

From that time he sunk into a state of insensibility, and about nine o'clock was released from all his sufferings. He had preached the Gospel with much success a considerable number of years in various parts of Britain, Ire-

land, and America. He was an excellent and useful preacher, a kind friend, and of an amiable, engaging disposition; his life was devoted to the service of God, and employed in the salvation of souls, and he is now reaping the reward of his labors. At the time of his death I was at Bandon, keeping a watch-night, but a messenger was waiting next morning at my chamber door with the awful tidings. When I got to Cork I found our friends involved in sorrow and lamenting their loss, particularly his widow. They had been married only thirteen months, and had one son, who soon after lost his mother by death. On the Lord's day I preached Mr. Boardman's funeral sermon to a very crowded audience. His remains were placed at the foot of the pulpit, which added to the solemnity of the occasion. In my retirement, before preaching, the task I was to enter upon seemed too much for my feelings; but the Lord saw my tears and heard my cries; he lifted me up and strengthened me."

The next day, followed by "a great multitude of serious people," singing hymns on the way, his brethren bore the remains of the hero to St. Barry's churchyard, where a modest monument commemorates his services. He had been faithful to the end. "He preached," says Wesley, "the night before he died. It seems that he might have been eminently useful; but good is the will of the Lord."[5] "In his last prayer," says the cotemporary biographer of Methodism, "at the Intercession on Friday, he prayed fervently for the people, and begged, that if this were to be their last meeting on earth, they might have a happy meeting in the realms of light. It is remarkable that when he was leaving Limerick he told Mrs. Boardman he should die in Cork. But this was no

[5] Minutes, 1783.

concern to him, as he knew that for him to live was Christ, and to die eternal gain. To him sudden death was sudden glory."[6]

Pilmoor hesitated to re-enter the itinerancy on his return. He is reported in Wesley's Minutes as "desisting" from traveling in 1774. He does not appear in the Minutes again till 1776, when he was gratified with an appointment in the metropolis. During the next two years he traveled the Norwich circuit. We can trace him afterward to Edinburgh, Dublin, Nottingham, Edinburgh again, and York. In 1785 his name disappears from the appointments without explanation, and appears in them no more. In the preceding year Wesley had made provision for the Episcopal organization of American Methodism, and also, by his "Deed of Declaration," for the constitution of the Wesleyan Conference, by the appointment of one hundred preachers who should legally represent that body after his death. Pilmoor was not included in either of these great measures. He was offended and retired.[7]

Returning to America, he took orders in the Protestant Episcopal Church and labored in Philadelphia. In 1802 a hundred and twenty-two members of Trinity Church, New York, petitioned its authorities to appoint him an assistant minister in its parish. The petition was refused; the petitioners seceded and organized a new Church on Ann-street, and, at last, obtained him as their pastor.[8] He afterward removed again to Philadelphia, where he was rector of St. Paul's Church, to the pulpit of which he often admitted Asbury, Coke, and other Methodist preachers. The University of Pennsylvania honored him with the title of Doctor of Divinity. He

[6] Atmore, p. 59.
[7] Wes. Mag., 1843, p. 15.
[8] Dr. Berrian's Historical Sketch of Trinity Church, p. 184.

died in a good old age, generally venerated. He never lost his original affection for his itinerant brethren. While in New York he saluted them at their Conference sessions, and paid an annual subscription to their Preachers' Fund. Asbury alludes to him frequently and affectionately. He outgrew his resentment against Wesley, and sincerely mourned his death. On hearing of that event he wrote to Atmore: "This will be handed to you by Dr. Coke, who leaves this country sooner than he intended, on account of the death of that truly great man, John Wesley. For some years I have been pleasing myself with the thought of seeing him again before his departure to paradise; but I am too late. I always most affectionately loved him, and shall feel a special regard for him even in heaven itself. If there be anything which touches my heart it is a concern for those preachers who were in the work before you or I ever heard of Methodism; and I entreat you to treat them with most tender respect. Yes, my friend, I do and shall eternally love you; and if I must not see you any more upon earth, I shall shortly meet you before the throne of God. Wishing you a time of refreshing at your Conference, I remain, in immortal affection, most unchangeably yours."[9] As late as 1807 he wrote again to the same old friend, "On earth, in heaven, I shall eternally love you. My heart is ever toward you in the Lord. As I am now on the border of another world, I feel it to be my duty to examine closely the ground upon which I stand. Two things are essential, a title to the inheritance, and a meetness for the enjoyment of it. By the former the right to the inheritance is secured; and by the latter the qualification for an eternal possession of bliss unutterably full of glory. It is well for me that it is all of grace; for wor-

[9] Wes. Mag., 1845, p. 210.

thiness of merit belongs not to man, especially to one so imperfect as I am. I am happy to hear, from various quarters, that religion is gloriously prospering in England, and that the Methodists have great success. The vine, long since planted by the venerable Wesley, has spread its branches and well-nigh filled the land. Blessed be God! Halleluiah! In this country too, where we poor under-planters were employed, the word has taken a universal spread, and the Methodists bid fair to outnumber most of their neighbors. This is indeed the Lord's doing; showing that life and zeal in religion are worth more than all the arts and sciences together. So it was in England, so it is in America, and so it will be in all the earth. 'Even so, Lord Jesus.'"[10] This sounds like his original Methodist vernacular. He never lost his Methodistic fervor. A veteran American Methodist itinerant says: "The truly evangelical spirit produced through his instrumentality in the congregations over which he presided, and a correspondent attention to some of the peculiar means of grace which he introduced among them, continued to manifest themselves for a number of years after his death."[11]

Though no minute accounts of the labors of these first Methodist itinerants, in America, remain, and we are left to the mere allusions of cotemporary records for an estimate of their services, these scattered notices suffice to show that they laid substantially and broadly the foundations of the denomination, preaching from Boston to Savannah, and preparing effectively, during more than four years, the work which their successors were to prosecute with a success which has had no parallel since the Apostolic Age.

[10] Ibid, p. 532.

[11] Rev. Dr. Sandford, Wes. Miss. to America, p. 26.

Richard Wright also returned to England in the early part of 1774. He had spent but one year in the British itinerancy before he accompanied Asbury to America. He labored chiefly in Maryland and Virginia, though there is evidence that he spent a part of 1772 in New York city.[12] On his return to Europe he continued to itinerate two or three years, when he located, and disappeared entirely from the records of the ministry.

Captain Webb lingered in the Colonies a year or more, after the departure of Boardman and Pilmoor, laboring with his might to extend and fortify the young Societies, notwithstanding the increasing tumults of politics and war. But the cotemporary records give us, further, only allusions to this noble man and devoted evangelist. We may here, therefore, properly take our final leave of him. He devoted at least nine years to the promotion of American Methodism, the periods of his absence in Europe being spent there in its behalf. I have not hesitated to pronounce him the principal founder of the denomination in the United States. No trace of his remaining life can, therefore, fail to be interesting to American readers.

On his return to England he secured a home for his family in Portland, on the heights of Bristol, but still traveled, and preached extensively in chapels, in market-places, and in the open air, attended by immense congregations. "How did he live the remainder of his life?" asks a British itinerant who knew him through most of his career; and he answers: "We add with pleasure that to him the promise was sure, 'He that hath clean hands shall grow stronger and stronger.' Having escaped so many dangers and deaths, he believed, like Jacob, that his 'Goel,' the good angel of the Lord, had redeemed him

[12] Wakeley, chap. 24.

from all mischief. To the end of his days he was persuaded that a ministering spirit, a guardian angel, had, through divine mercy, attended him all the way in his diversified pilgrimage. He left everywhere a high example of persevering diligence and zeal. From the year 1776 to 1782, a time of war by land and sea, he annually made a summer's visit to the French prisoners at Winchester, addressing them in their own language, which he had studied while in Canada. He proceeded thence to Portsmouth, where crowded auditories of soldiers and sailors listened to him with all possible veneration. In Bristol and the neighboring country, wherever he preached, spiritual good was effected."

In 1792 he was liberal and active in erecting the Portland Church at Bristol, "one of the most elegant chapels," says a Wesleyan author, "in the Methodist connection, if not in the kingdom." He preached his last sermon in it. "He appeared," says the same authority, "to have had a presentiment for some time of his approaching dissolution, and shortly before his death he spoke to an intimate friend of the place and manner of his interment, observing: "I should prefer a triumphant death; but I may be taken away suddenly. However, I know I am happy in the Lord, and shall be with him whenever he calls me hence, and that is sufficient." In the autobiography of one of the leading cotemporary preachers we read: "Dec. 8th, 1796. I spent a profitable hour with that excellent man, Captain Webb, of Bristol. He is indeed truly devoted to God, and has maintained a consistent profession for many years. He is now in his seventy-second year, and as active as many who have only attained their fiftieth. He gives to the cause of God, and to the poor of Christ's flock, the greater part of his income. He is waiting, with cheerful anticipation, for

his great and full reward. He bids fair to go to the grave like a shock of corn, fully ripe." Again we read: "Wednesday, Dec. 21st. Last night, about eleven o'clock, Captain Webb suddenly entered into the joy of his Lord. He partook of his supper, and retired to rest about ten o'clock in his usual health. In less than an hour his spirit left the tenement of clay to enter the realms of eternal bliss. He professed to have had some presentiment that he should change worlds during the present year, and that his departure would be sudden." And again: "Saturday, Dec. 24th. This afternoon the remains of the good old captain were deposited in a vault under the communion table of Portland Chapel. He was carried by six local preachers, and the pall was supported by the Rev. Messrs. Bradford, Pritchard, Roberts, Davies, Mayer, and M'Geary. I conducted the funeral service, and Mr. Pritchard preached from Acts xx, 24. It was a solemn season, and will long be remembered by those who were present."

The venerable soldier and evangelist was thus laid to rest by "a crowded, weeping audience." The "Society showed him great respect; the chapel was hung in mourning;" and the trustees erected a marble monument to his memory within its walls, pronouncing him "Brave, Active, Courageous,—Faithful, Zealous, Successful,—the principal instrument in erecting this chapel." His name must be forever illustrious in the ecclesiastical history of the New World, and American Methodists will close this final account of a character so historically important and so intrinsically interesting, with regret that the record must present such a paucity of facts.

CHAPTER VIII.

NATIVE EVANGELISTS.

William Watters, the first native Methodist Itinerant — His early Life — His Conversion — He becomes an Itinerant — Robert Williams — Rev. Devereux Jarratt — Great religious Excitement in Virginia — Watters on the Eastern Shore of Maryland — Methodism in Kent County — Its first Chapel — Philip Gatch, the second native Itinerant — His early Life — Nathan Perigan — Gatch's Conversion — He begins to preach — Itinerates in New Jersey — Benjamin Abbott — His Character — His early History — His moral Struggles — His Conversion — The Fall of Abraham Whitforth — Abbott begins to preach — Power of his Word — A remarkable Example — Daniel Ruff.

While some of the laborers were retiring from the field, others were entering it—more important, because native evangelists. William Watters's name appears in the list of appointments made at the first American conference, and to him is now universally conceded the peculiar distinction of being the first native American itinerant of Methodism; an honor never to be shared, never impaired. He has left us an unpretentious "Short Account" of his "Christian experience and ministerial labors."[1] He was born in Baltimore county, Maryland, on the 16th of October, 1751. His parents were strict members of the English Church, and from his infancy he was addicted to religious reflections. "At a very early period," he writes, "I well remember to have been under serious impressions at various times;" but when about twelve or fourteen years old he took, he says, "great delight in

[1] A Short Account of the Christian Experience and Ministerial Labors of William Watters. Drawn up by himself. Alexandria. Printed by S. Snowden. The imprint has no date, but the preface is dated Fairfax, May 14, 1806.

dancing, card-playing, horse-racing, and such pernicious practices, though often terrified with thoughts of eternity in the midst of them. Thus did my precious time roll away while I was held in the chains of my sins, too often a willing captive of the devil. I had no one to tell me the evil of sin, or to teach me the way of life and salvation. The two ministers in the two parishes, with whom I was acquainted, were both immoral men, and had no gifts for the ministry; if they received their salary they appeared to think but little about the souls of the people. The blind were evidently leading the blind, and it was by the mere mercy of God that we did not all fall into hell altogether." When sixteen or seventeen years of age he was considered by his associates "a very good Christian," but he thought of himself quite otherwise. "It was," he says, "my constant practice to attend the church with my prayer book, and to often read my Bible and other good books, and sometimes I attempted to say my prayers in private. Many times, when I have been sinning against God, I have felt much inward uneasiness, and often, on reflection, a hell within, till I could invent something to divert my mind from such reflections. Hence, strange as it may appear, I have left the dancing-room to pray to God that he might not be offended with me, and have then returned to it again with as much delight as ever."

Strawbridge, King, and Williams were abroad around him, preaching in private houses, and in 1770 he had frequent opportunities of hearing them. "I could not conceive," he writes, "what they meant by saying we must be born again, and, though I thought but little of all I heard, for some time, yet I dared not despise and revile them, as many then did. By frequently being in company with several of my old acquaintances, who had pro-

fessed Methodism, among whom was my oldest brother and his wife, (who I thought equal to any religious people in the world,) and hearing them all declare, as with one voice, that they knew nothing of heart-religion, the religion of the Bible, till since they had heard the Methodists preach, I was utterly confounded; and I could not but say with Nicodemus, 'How can these things be?' While I was marveling at the unheard-of things that these strange people were spreading wherever they came, and before I was aware, I found my heart inclined to forsake many of my vain practices, and at the last place of merriment I ever attended, I remember well I was hardly even a looker-on. So vain did all their mirth appear to me, as did also their dancing, which I was formerly so fond of, that now no arguments could prevail on me to be seen on the floor. I had my reflections, though I was on the devil's ground; and, among others, while I was looking at a young man of property, who was beastly drunk and scarcely able to sit in his chair, a dog passed by, and I deliberately thought I would rather be that dog than a drunkard. Some, even of my friends, began to fear that I should become a Methodist; but I had no such thought, and yet I often found my poor heart drawn to them, as a people that lived in a manner I never had known any to live before."

By the religious care of his early education and the natural tenderness of his conscience, it was impossible that he could long resist the Methodist influences which now met him on every side. "I seldom, if ever," he adds, "omitted bowing my sinful knees before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, four or five times a day. It was daily my prayer that God would teach me the way of life and salvation, and not suffer me to be deceived. After being uncommonly uneasy for several

days concerning the state of my soul, I went with my eldest brother and family to a prayer-meeting in his neighborhood on a Sabbath day; and while one was at prayer I saw a man near me, whom I knew to be a poor sinner, trembling, weeping, and praying, as though his all depended on the present moment; his soul and body were in an agony. The gracious Lord, who works by what means he pleases, blessed this circumstance greatly to my conviction; so that I felt, in a manner which I have not words fully to express, that I must be internally changed, that I must be born of the Spirit, or never see the face of God. Without this, I was deeply sensible that all I had done or could do was vain. I went home much distressed, and fully determined, by the grace of God, to seek the salvation of my soul with my whole heart. In this frame of mind, I soon got by myself and fell upon my knees. But, alas! my sinful heart felt as a rock, and though I believed myself in the 'gall of bitterness and in the bonds of iniquity,' and, of course, that if I died in that state I must die eternally, yet I could not shed one tear, neither could I find words to express my wretchedness before my merciful High Priest; I could only bemoan my forlorn state, and I wandered about through the afternoon in solitary places, seeking rest but finding none."

That night, however, in another prayer-meeting, both his heart and eyes melted. "I was so melted down and blessed with such a praying heart, that I should have been glad if they would have continued on their knees all night in prayer for me, a poor, helpless wretch."

The next day he was unfit for any business: he spent it in retirement. "I refused to be comforted but by the Friend of sinners. My cry was, day and night, Save, Lord, or I perish; give me Christ, or else I die. In this

state I loved nothing better than weeping, mourning, and prayer, humbly hoping, waiting, and longing for the coming of the Lord. For three days and nights eating, drinking, and sleeping in a measure fled from me while my flesh wasted away and my strength failed in such a manner that I found it was not without cause that it is asked, 'A wounded spirit who can heal?' Having returned in the afternoon from the woods to my chamber, my eldest brother (at whose house I was) knowing my distress, entered my room with all the sympathy of a brother and a Christian. To my great astonishment he informed me that God had that day blessed him with his pardoning love. After giving me all the advice in his power, he kneeled down with me, and with a low, soft voice (which was frequently interrupted by tears) he offered up a fervent prayer to God for my present salvation." He received "a gleam of hope," but was not content with it. The next day several "praying persons," who knew his distress, visited him. He requested them to pray with him, and the family was called in, though it was about the middle of the day. "While they all joined in singing, my face," he says, "was turned to the wall, with my eyes lifted upward in a flood of tears, and I felt a lively hope that the Lord, whom I sought, would suddenly come to his temple. My good friends sung with the spirit and in faith. The Lord heard and appeared spiritually in the midst of us. A divine light beamed through my inmost soul, and in a few minutes encircled me around, surpassing the brightness of the noonday sun. Of this divine glory, with the holy glow that I felt within my soul, I have still as distinct an idea as that I ever saw the light of the natural sun, but know not how fully to express myself so as to be understood by those

who are in a state of nature, unexperienced in the things of God; for 'the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned.' My burden was gone, my sorrow fled, all that was within me rejoiced in hope of the glory of God; while I beheld such fullness and willingness in the Lord Jesus to save lost sinners, and my soul so rested in him, that I could now, for the first time, call Jesus Christ 'Lord, by the Holy Ghost given unto me.' The hymn being concluded, we all fell upon our knees, but my prayers were all turned into praises."

Such was the spiritual birth of the first regular Methodist preacher of the new world. This "memorable change," he says, took place in May, 1771, in the twentieth year of his age. In the same house where he was born "a child of wrath," he was also "born a child of grace." He immediately joined a Methodist class All Methodists were, in those days, laborers in the evangelical vineyard. On the Lord's day, he says, they commonly divided into little bands and went out into different neighborhoods, wherever there was a door open to receive them, two, three, or four in company, and would sing their hymns, pray, read, talk to the people, "and some soon began to add a word of exhortation." "We were weak, but we lived in a dark day, and the Lord greatly owned our labors; for though we were not full of wisdom, we were blessed with a good degree of faith and power. The little flock was of one mind, and the Lord spread the leaven of his grace from heart to heart, from house to house, and from one neighborhood to another. It was astonishing to see how rapidly the work extended all around us, bearing down opposition as chaff before the wind. Many will praise God

forever for our prayer-meetings. In many neighborhoods they soon became respectable, and were considerably attended." Two of his brothers were converted through his instrumentality, one of them becoming a zealous Local Preacher, and later, a Traveling Preacher.

One of Wesley's sermons, published by Robert Williams, led William Watters into a still deeper spiritual experience, and he became an advocate, by his life as well as his exhortations, of entire sanctification.

In 1772, when he was twenty-one years old, he began to preach. Robert Williams perceived his capacity for usefulness, and took him, in the autumn, to Norfolk, Va. The scene of his departure for an itinerant life was deeply affecting. His mother, whom he loved tenderly, offered him all her possessions if he would abandon his purpose. Many of his friends "wept and hung around" him; "but," he adds, "I found such resignation and so clear a conviction that my way was of the Lord, that I was enabled to commit them and myself to the care of our heavenly Father, in humble confidence, that if we never met again in this vale of tears, we should soon meet where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. Calling at one of my brothers on my way to take my leave of them, at parting my fortitude seemed all banished, and I was so exceedingly affected, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could find any utterance to commit them in prayer to the Divine protection. O for a continual preparation to meet where all tears shall be wiped away. Even so, Lord Jesus. Amen." And now he began in earnest his itinerant career. The two evangelists journeyed and preached, almost daily, through Baltimore, Georgetown, and other places, and arrived at last in Norfolk, where, under many discouragements, Watters soon formed a circuit, extending

some distance among the neighboring towns. He was seized with the measles, but continued his labors. "To my inexpressible consolation," he says, "several, both in town and country, were brought to know the Lord, which gave a fresh spring to my humble endeavors. I felt liberty and power to speak the words of eternal life, and often resolved to be more faithful in the important work, and to labor while it was called to-day."

Pilmoor had been preaching in Norfolk; he was now released by Watters to pursue his southern tour to Charleston. Williams also left the young itinerant and hastened to Portsmouth and further; Jarratt and M'Roberts, "two English clergymen," received him with open arms, and welcomed him to their parishes. Jarratt became a staunch friend to the Methodist itinerants and the confidential friend of Asbury: his name often occurs in the early Methodist publications. He had the good sense, like Fletcher, Grimshaw, Venn, and Perronet, in England, to co-operate with them; and had his clerical brethren, of the colonies, more generally followed his example, the subsequent relations of the Protestant Episcopal and Methodist Episcopal Churches might have been very different from what they have been. Samuel Davies, the celebrated President of Princeton College, and the friend and correspondent of Wesley, had trained Jarratt for the ministry. The latter became rector of the parish of Bath, Dinwiddie county, Va., in 1763. His zealous labors produced a widespread sensation. "Revivals" prevailed around him for fifty or sixty miles during about twelve years. He held frequent meetings, and, like the Methodists, formed numerous societies, "which," he says, he "found a happy means of building up those who had believed and of preventing the rest

from losing their convictions."[2] In 1773 he wrote to Wesley,[3] "Virginia (the land of my nativity) has long groaned through a want of faithful ministers of the Gospel. Many souls are perishing for lack of knowledge, many crying for the bread of life, and no man is found to break it to them. We have ninety-five parishes in the colony, and all, except one, I believe are supplied with clergymen. But, alas! you well understand the rest. I know of but one clergyman of the Church of England who appears to have the power and spirit of vital religion; for all seek their own, and not the things that are Christ's. Is not our situation then truly deplorable? And does it not call loudly upon the friends of Zion on your side the Atlantic to assist us? Many people here heartily join with me in returning our most grateful acknowledgments for the concern you have shown for us in sending so many preachers to the American colonies. Two have preached for some time in Virginia: Mr. Pilmoor and Mr. Williams. I have never had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Pilmoor, but by all I can learn, he is a gracious soul and a good preacher. With Mr. Williams I have had many delightful interviews. He has just now returned to my house from a long excursion through the back counties. I hope he will be able to write you joyful tidings of his success. But after all, what can two or three preachers do in such an extended country as this? Cannot you do something more for us? Cannot you send us a minister of the Church of England, to be stationed in that one vacant parish I have mentioned? In all probability he would be of great service. The parish I am speaking of is about

[2] See his "Brief Narration," addressed to Wesley through Rankin. Asbury's Journals, anno 1776.

[3] Letter in Arm. Mag., 1786, p. 397.

forty miles from me. The people are anxious to hear the truth. The parishes around it afford a wide field of itineration; for I would have no minister of Jesus, as matters now stand, confined to the limits of one parish. Mr. A. M'Roberts, the gentleman referred to above, is an Israelite indeed. He is a warm, zealous, striking preacher. He is constantly making excursions toward Maryland and Pennsylvania in the North and North-east, while I make a tour of the parishes lying to the South and South-east. Now if we had one to take his station forty miles to the West, we should be able to go through the country. I flatter myself it will be so. I shall wait with expectation till I am favored with an answer from you. I trust it will be such an answer as will rejoice my heart and the hearts of thousands."

He gratefully acknowledges that in the counties of Sussex and Brunswick "the work, from the year 1773, was chiefly carried on by the labors of the people called Methodists." He that year received Williams to his house and his church. "I earnestly recommended it to my Societies," he says, "to pray much for the prosperity of Sion, and for a larger outpouring of the Spirit of God. They did so; and not in vain. We have had a time of refreshing indeed: a revival of religion, as great as perhaps ever was known in country places in so short a time. In almost every assembly might be seen signal instances of divine power, more especially in the meetings of the classes. Here many old stout-hearted sinners felt the force of truth, and their eyes were open to discover their guilt and danger. The shaking among the dry bones was increased from week to week; nay, sometimes ten or twelve have been deeply convinced of sin in one day. Some of these were in great distress, and when they were questioned concerning the state of their souls were scarce able

to make any reply but by weeping and falling on their knees before all the Class, and earnestly soliciting the prayers of God's people. Numbers of old and gray-headed, of middle-aged persons, of youth, yea, of little children, were the subjects of this work. Some of these children speak of the whole process of the work of God, of their convictions, the time when, and the manner how, they obtained deliverance, with such clearness as might convince an atheist that this is nothing else but the great power of God. Many in these parts who had long neglected the means of grace now flocked to hear, not only me and the traveling preachers, but also the exhorters and leaders. And at their meetings for prayer some have been in such distress that they have continued therein for five or six hours. It has been found that these prayer-meetings were singularly useful in promoting the work of God. The outpouring of the Spirit which began here soon extended itself, more or less, through most of the circuit, which is regularly attended by the traveling preachers, and which takes in a circumference of between four and five hundred miles. And the work went on, with a pleasing progress, till the beginning of May, when they held a quarterly meeting at B.'s chapel, in my parish. This stands at the lower line of the parish, thirty miles from W.'s chapel, at the upper line of it, where the work began. At this meeting one might truly say, the windows of heaven were opened and the rain of divine influence poured down for more than forty days. The work now became more deep than ever, extended wider, and was swifter in its operations. Many were savingly converted to God, and in a very short time not only in my parish, but through several parts of Brunswick, Sussex, Prince George, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, and Amelia Counties."

It will be observed that this pious rector not only received the Methodists, but adopted many of their peculiar methods. We shall meet him again in the course of our narrative and find him long a faithful colaborer of the itinerants in Virginia. Williams formed, in 1774, the old Brunswick Circuit, extending from Petersburg into North Carolina, the first reported in Virginia. Jarratt requested that his parish might be included in this circuit, that "all who chose it might have the privilege of meeting in Class and of being members of the Society." He soon "saw the salutary effects. Many that had but small desires before began to be much alarmed, and labored earnestly after eternal life. In a little time numbers were deeply awakened, and many tasted of the pardoning love of God. In a few months he saw more fruit of his labors than he had for many years. And he went on with the preachers, hand in hand, both in doctrine and discipline."

This good work, the result as much of the Catholic cooperation of the rector as of the labors of the itinerants, continued down to 1775, when Shadford had charge of the circuit. He reported no less than "two thousand six hundred and sixty-four persons in the Societies; to whom eighteen hundred were added in one year. Above a thousand of these had found peace with God, many of whom thirsted for all the mind that was in Christ. And divers believed God had 'circumcised their heart to love him with all the heart and with all the soul.' The revival spread through fourteen counties in Virginia; and through Bute and Halifax Counties in North Carolina."

In the absence of Williams, on his visit to Jarratt, Watters was prostrated with nervous fever, and for some time he seemed suspended between life and death. It tested and proved his faith. Coming forth from the attack he exclaims, "O what inexpressible desires did I

feel to devote the remnant of my days to the honor of God, who had done great things for such a poor worm!" He returned to his home after an absence of eleven months, in which he had been thoroughly initiated into the hardships and triumphs of the itinerancy. He met Asbury for the first time, and journeyed on horseback with him some miles; Rankin also came across his path, and he saw in these apostolic men the highest models of ministerial character.

At the Conference of 1773, which he did not attend, he was appointed, as we have seen, with John King, to New Jersey; but neither of them traveled that long circuit; another native preacher was to take his place there. Watters's sickness had detained him away, and Rankin altered his appointment to Kent, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The young itinerant again took affecting leave of his home, and rode forth on his evangelical adventures. "On my way," he says, "I felt a humiliating sense of my littleness of faith, and my unprofitableness in the Lord's vineyard; and, from my inmost soul, promised him that I would set out afresh both to live and preach the Gospel, and, through infinite mercy, I felt a divine evidence that he would be with me and bring me to the people to whom I was going in the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace. In this circuit, which was a two weeks' one, and the only one then between the two bays, I continued four or five months with greater freedom and success in preaching than ever before. Many, in different places, attended our meetings, and I had one invitation after another into new neighborhoods. Though I had but a few places, when I first went into the circuit, in a short time I was not able to go through them all in two weeks, and before I left it the circuit might have been readily enlarged to four weeks,

Many were awakened and soundly converted, and we had as powerful times, for the number of people, as I have generally seen. I was much blest in my own soul, and confirmed in my call to the work of the ministry. Day and night the salvation of the people was uppermost in my mind. Our little number was daily increased, and great were our rejoicings in the Lord our righteousness. The prospect was such, and our attachment to each other so great, that it was with some reluctance I returned home in the forepart of the spring following."

The Eastern Shore was thenceforth to be a "fruitful garden of Methodism." At the next Conference "Kent" was reported in the Minutes as a circuit, the first formed on the Peninsula, and in the same year its first church, "Kent Meeting-house," was erected. The chapel rose amid hostility; the timbers prepared for it were carried away at night and burned; but the Society persisted, and at last entered, with prayer and praise, their humble temple. It has since been known as "Hinson's Chapel." "At this chapel," says an authority familiar with the locality, "rests the dust of John Smith, the first itinerant that came into the work from Kent county, Md. Here, also, sleep the remains of the Christian philosopher, William Gill, who with his fingers closed his own eyes as he was sinking into the long sleep of the grave; and were it said that he, while yet able, preached his own funeral sermon, we should receive it as characteristic of this man, who was so fully freed from the fear of death. It would seem that the first Society in Kent was formed in the beginning of 1773, and that it was in the neighborhood of the present Hinson's Chapel; nor does it appear that there was more than one Society at this time in the county."[4]

On retiring from the Eastern Shore, Watters labored,

[4] Lednum, p. 127.

till the next Conference, in Baltimore and its vicinity His success was not remarkable there, but he passed through inward experiences which tended to fit him for his future career. "I did not," he says, "find that life, power, and liberty in my ministrations as among the people I had left on the other shore. I frequently found, to my great grief, that my religion was too superficial, and that though sin did not reign in me, yet it remained and marred my happiness. I often mourned, wept, fasted, prayed, and truly longed to be sanctified throughout soul, body, and spirit, that I might be able to serve the Lord without interruption." He was still seeking for that "deep recollection and constant communion with the Lord which nothing for a moment should interrupt."

Such was William Watters, the first of the thousands, the tens of thousands, of American Methodist itinerants who have spread the Gospel over the North American continent; a man fervent in spirit, prudent in counsel, indefatigable in labor, saintly in piety.

Another native preacher, destined to become noted in the Church, entered the itinerancy in 1773, though his name, Philip Gatch, does not appear in the Minutes till the next Conference. As Watters had failed to reach his appointment in New Jersey, Gatch was now called out by Rankin to supply it.

Philip Gatch is one of the most admirable characters in early Methodist history, a founder of the denomination in both the East and the West, and worthy to have been commemorated by the pen of a public citizen who himself was worthy to be esteemed the most eminent lay Methodist of the United States.[5]

He was born near Georgetown, Md., in the same

[5] Sketch of Rev. Philip Gatch. Prepared by Hon. John M'Lean, LL.D., Judge of the Supreme Court of the United States. Cincinnati. 1854.

year as Watters, 1751; they began their public labors as Exhorters the same year, and they were the first two native Methodist preachers reported in the "Minutes." They were remarkably similar also in character, being early and deeply susceptible of religious impressions, a fact that, perhaps, more than any other, is the pledge of an upright life, of conscientious decision of character, and of distinguished usefulness. "I learned to read," he says, "when quite young, took delight in my books, especially those which gave a history of the times of pious persons. A sister older than myself used to watch over me with a tender regard. I recollect at one time, on using a bad word, the meaning of which I hardly knew, she reproved me in such a manner as to make a deep and lasting impression on my feelings. My conscience was quick and tender, and I felt the evil of sin, and endured great pain of soul on account of it. I seldom omitted my prayers, and strove to make my mind easy with the forms of religion; but this availed but little. Sinful acts in general I hated. I feared the Lord, and had a great desire to serve him; but knew not how. All was dark and dreary around me, and there was no one in the neighborhood who possessed religion. Priests and people in this respect were alike." In his seventeenth year a dangerous illness alarmed his conscience. "The subjects of death and judgment," he writes, "rested upon my mind. I determined to try a course of self-denial. I resolved to break down the carnal mind by crucifying the flesh with its lusts and affections. I found this course to be of great service to me. All this time I had not heard a Gospel sermon. I had read some of the writings of the Society of Friends, and had a great desire to attend their meetings, but had not the opportunity. I felt that I had lost my standing in the Established Church by not performing

the obligations of my induction into it, and this was a source of great distress to me. I desired rest to my soul, but had no one to take me by the hand and lead me to the fountain of life. Indeed from a child, the Spirit of grace strove with me; but great was the labor of mind that I felt, and I did not know the way to be saved from my guilt and wretchedness. It pleased God, however, to send the Gospel into our neighborhood, in January, 1772, through the instrumentality of the Methodists. Previous to this time Robert Strawbridge had settled between Baltimore and Fredericktown, and under his ministry three others were raised up, Richard Owen, Sater Stephenson, and Nathan Perigau. Nathan Perigan was the first to introduce Methodist preaching in the neighborhood where I lived. He possessed great zeal, and was strong in the faith of the Gospel. I was near him when he opened the exercises of the first meeting I attended. His prayer alarmed me much; I never had witnessed such energy nor heard such expressions in prayer before. I was afraid that God would send some judgment upon the congregation for my being at such a place. I attempted to make my escape. I was met by a person at the door who proposed to leave with me, but I knew he was wicked, and that it would not do to follow his counsel, so I returned. The sermon was accompanied to my understanding by the Holy Spirit. I was stripped of all my self-righteousness. It was to me as filthy rags when the Lord made known to me my condition. I saw myself altogether sinful and helpless, while the dread of hell seized my guilty conscience. Three weeks from this time I attended preaching again at the same place. My distress became very great; my relatives were all against me, and it was hard to endure my father's opposition."

Nathan Perigau was one of the most powerful of the Local Preachers who were now co-operating with Strawbridge in Maryland. Gatch, after five or six weeks of profound anguish, heard him again, and was "confounded under the word." The early Methodists were singularly exact in the matter of conversion, and the cotemporary memoirs abound in grateful commemorations of dates in their spiritual history. Philip Gatch records that "on the 26th of April I attended a prayer-meeting. After remaining some time, I gave up all hopes, and left the house. I felt that I was too bad to remain where the people were worshiping God. At length a friend came out to me, and requested me to return to the meeting; believing him to be a good man I returned with him, and, under the deepest exercise of mind, bowed myself before the Lord, and said in my heart, If thou wilt give me power to call on thy name how thankful will I be! Immediately I felt the power of God to affect me, body and soul. I felt like crying aloud. God said, by his Spirit, to my soul, 'My power is present to heal thy soul, if thou wilt but believe.' I instantly submitted to the operation of the Spirit of God, and my poor soul was set at liberty. I felt as if I had got into a new world. I was certainly brought from hell's dark door, and made nigh unto God by the blood of Jesus. I was the first person known to shout in that part of the country. A grateful sense of the mercy and goodness of God to my poor soul overwhelmed me. I tasted, and saw that the Lord was good. Two others found peace the same evening, which made seven conversions in the neighborhood. I returned home happy in the love of God."

His father had threatened to drive him from his home, and the young convert now expected a harsh reception

"There is your elder brother," the father had said to him in his deep contrition, "he has better learning than you: if there is anything good in it why does he not find it out?" But this elder brother was "powerfully converted" at the same meeting with young Gatch, and the father was now disarmed of his opposition. The brothers introduced family prayers immediately into the household, and Philip Gatch's first exhortation was at the altar of his home. "The Lord blessed me," he says, "with a spirit of prayer, and he made manifest his power among us. I rose from my knees and spoke to them some time, and it had a gracious effect upon the family Thenceforward we attended to family prayer."

They soon had Perigau preaching in the house. Classes were formed; Gatch's parents, most of their children, a brother-in-law and two sisters-in-law, were, in a few weeks, recorded among the class-members. "The work was great, for it was the work of God." One of Robert Williams's cheap publications—Wesley's Sermon on Salvation by Faith—led young Gatch into a knowledge of the deeper things of God, and while attending family worship, "the Spirit of the Lord," he writes, "came down upon me, and the opening heavens shone around me. By faith I saw Jesus at the right hand of the Father. I felt such a weight of glory that I fell with my face to the floor, and the Lord said by his Spirit, 'You are now sanctified, seek to grow in the fruit of the Spirit.' Gal. v, 22, 23. This work and the instruction of Divine truth were sealed on my soul by the Holy Ghost. My joy was full. This was in July, a little more than two months after I had received justification."

Thus he "was taken fully into the school of Christ, and was being trained for the duties and sufferings that awaited him as a pioneer-laborer in the extensive fields

that were already whitening to the harvest in the colonies of North America."

In the latter part of 1772 Philip Gatch was abroad, a zealous Exhorter; he had formed "a humble circuit" of three appointments beyond the Pennsylvania line. In the following year he preached his first sermon at "Evans's Meeting-house, the oldest Society of Baltimore county." At a Quarterly Meeting in that county Rankin met him, and, commissioning him as a traveling preacher, sent him off to "the Jerseys," to fill the vacancy occasioned by the absence of Watters. "I found it," he says, "a severe trial to part with my parents and friends. My feelings for a time got the ascendency; it was like breaking asunder the tender cords of life, a kind of death to me, but I dared not to look back. He that will be Christ's disciple must forsake all and follow him. I met Mr. Rankin according to appointment. Mr. Asbury lay sick at the place of meeting. He called for me to his room, and gave me such advice as he thought suitable to my case. He was well fitted to administer to my condition, for he had left father and mother behind when he came to America."

The humble but successful John King, first Methodist preacher in Baltimore, had been appointed with Watters to New Jersey. He now met Gatch to introduce him to his new field and his untried life. John King was prompt and energetic, pausing not for ceremonious attentions. "In company with Mr. King," says Gatch, "I crossed the Delaware. He preached and held a love-feast. On the following morning, he pursued his journey, leaving me a stranger in a strange land." King was immediately away to distant regions, and Gatch was now alone in the whole state, as a ministerial representative of Methodism, a stripling of twenty-one years, of small stat

ure and very youthful appearance, the first preacher sent as a regular itinerant to New Jersey. "Three considerations," he says, "rested on my mind with great weight: first, my own weakness; secondly, the help that God alone could afford; and, thirdly, the salvation of the souls of the people to whom I was sent. The Lord was with me, and my labors on the circuit were crowned with some success. Not many joined at that time to be called by our name, for it was very much spoken against. Fifty-two united with the Church, most of whom professed religion. Benjamin Abbott's wife and three of her children were among the number. David, one of the children, became a useful preacher. Though I found the cross to be very heavy while serving the circuit in my imperfect manner, when I was called to part with the friends for whom I had been laboring I found it to be a great trial, for we possessed the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." He continued in this extensive field till the Annual Conference of 1774.

About the year 1773 another notable evangelist appeared in New Jersey, who, though he was not yet recorded in the Minutes, equaled his itinerant brethren in labors if not in travels. The name of Benjamin Abbott has already been cited; in our day that name is inscribed on a monument under the shadow of a Methodist Church in Salem, N. J., one of the principal scenes of his usefulness; thousands of Methodists have visited it in devout pilgrimage, and thousands will, as long as the denomination lasts, pondering the wonders of his strangely eventful life. Benjamin Abbott became one of the most memorable men of early Methodism. He was thoroughly original, unique in mind and character; religious biography hardly records his fellow except in the story of the "evangelical tinker" and "glorious dreamer" of Bedford

jail. Like Bunyan, he had a rude, robust, but holy soul, profound in the mysteries of spiritual life; a temperament deeply mystic and subject to marvelous experiences which baffle all scientific explanation, unless we resort to the doubtful solutions of clairvoyance and somnambulism. He was a great dreamer, and his "visions of the night," recorded with unquestionable honesty, were often verified by the most astonishing coincidences. He was an evangelical Hercules, and wielded the word as a rude irresistible club rather than a sword. His whole soul seemed pervaded by a certain magnetic power that thrilled his discourses and radiated from his person, drawing, melting, and frequently prostrating the stoutest opposers in his congregation. It is probable that no Methodist laborer of his day reclaimed more men from abject vice. He seldom preached without visible results, and his prayers were overwhelming.

Like Bunyan, his early life had been riotously wicked. He first appears as an apprentice in Philadelphia, "where," he says, "I soon fell into bad company, and from that to card-playing, cock-fighting, and many other evil practices. My master and I parted before my time was out, and I went into Jersey, and hired with one of my brothers, where I wrought at plantation work. Some time after this I married, and when I got what my father left me I rented a farm, and followed that business. All this time I had no fear of him before my eyes, but lived in sin and open rebellion against God, in drinking, fighting, swearing, gambling, etc.; yet I worked hard and got a comfortable living for my family."[6] The moral sense, however, seldom dies out, even in the rudest and most

[6] Experience and Gospel Labors of the Rev. Benjamin Abbott. To which is annexed a Narrative of his Life and Death. By John Firth. New York. 1854.

reckless souls; and no fact is more clearly shown, in the history of the success of Methodism among the common people, than that the most apparently reprobate men, the drunken, blasphemous, uproarious leaders of the mobs which so frequently opposed the early itinerants, have borne, even in scenes of outrageous hostility, sensitive, trembling consciences; deep, hidden chords of moral susceptibility which, touched by the right appeal, have responded with the finest delicacy of religious feeling. God, who has made all men for immortality, has left none without the faculty, the instinct even, for religion. Scores, if not hundreds, of boisterous opposers, stricken by the preaching of Abbott, bowed in tears before him, ready to kiss his feet. He knew how to address them, for he had been one of them; and while yet himself in vice, he "went," he says, "often to meeting, and many times the Spirit of God alarmed my guilty soul of its danger; but it as often wore off again. Thus I continued in a scene of sin until the fortieth year of my age; yet many were the promises I made, during that period, to amend my life, but all to no purpose; they were as often broken as made; for as yet I never had heard the nature of conviction or conversion: it was a dark time respecting religion, and little or nothing was ever said about experimental religion; and to my knowledge I never had heard either man or woman say that they had the pardoning love of God in their souls, or knew their sins were forgiven. My wife was a member of the Presbyterian Church, and a praying woman; yet at that time she knew nothing about a heart-work."

Waking and sleeping, his strong soul was struggling against itself. The truths that he resisted by day overwhelmed him in the dreams of the night. Coming out of one of these visions, "I awoke," he writes, with

"amazement at what I had seen, and concluded that I should shortly die, which brought all my sins before me, and caused me to make many promises to God to repent, which lasted for some time; but this wore off again, and I went to my old practices." Reports of a Methodist preacher reach him; he goes to hear him, and returns "thinking of his misspent life;" "in a moment," he says, "all my sins that I ever had committed were brought to my view; I saw it was the mercy of God that I was out of hell, and promised to amend my life in future. I went home under awful sensations of a future state; my convictions increased, and I began to read my Bible with attention, and saw things in a different light from what I had ever seen them before, and made many promises to God, with tears and groans, to forsake sin; but I knew not the way to Christ for refuge, being ignorant of the nature both of conviction and conversion. But blessed be God, he still gave me light, so that the work was deepened in my soul day by day. The preacher came to preach in our neighborhood, and I went to hear him again; it being a new thing in the place many came together to hear him. The word reached my heart in such a manner that it shook every joint in my body; tears flowed in abundance, and I cried out for mercy, of which the people took notice, and many were melted into tears. When the sermon was over, the people flocked around the preacher and began to dispute with him about principles of religion. I said that there never was such preaching as this; but the people said, 'Abbott is going mad.'"

And now, as with Bunyan, ensued a struggle with despair itself; "Satan suggested to me that my day of grace was over; therefore I might pray and cry, but he was sure of me at last." In passing through a lonely wood at night, he was tempted to commit suicide; but while looking

for a suitable place for the deed, he was deterred by an inward voice, which said, "this torment is nothing compared to hell." This was logic too clear to be resisted; he forthwith mounted his wagon, and believing the tempter to be immediately behind him, drove home "under the greatest anxiety imaginable," with his hair "rising on his head." His mind had evidently become morbid under its moral sufferings. His dreams that night were appalling; the next day, seeking relief in the labors of the field, his "troubled heart beat so loud that he could hear the strokes." He threw down his scythe and "stood weeping for his sins." Such is the reclaiming, the sublime strength of conscience in the rudest soul when once awakened. This "strong man armed" in his vices, ignorant, boisterous, and dreaded among his neighbors, but now standing in the solitude of the field "weeping for his sins," was a spectacle for men and angels. "I believe," he adds, "I could not have continued in the body had not God moderated the pain and anxiety I was in, but must have expired before the going down of the sun." He flew to the end of his field, fell upon his knees, and for the first time in his life prayed aloud. Hastening the same day to a Methodist meeting, "I went in," he writes, "sat down, and took my little son upon my knee; the preacher began soon after. His word was attended with such power that it ran through me from head to foot; I shook and trembled like Belshazzar, and felt that I should cry out if I did not leave the house, which I determined to do, that I might not expose myself among the people; but when I attempted to put my little son down and rise to go, I found that my strength had failed me, and the use of my limbs was so far gone that I was utterly unable to rise. Immediately I cried aloud, *Save, Lord, or I perish!*

But before the preacher concluded, I refrained and wiped my eyes; my heart gave way to shame, and I was tempted to wish I was dead or could die, as I had so exposed myself that my neighbors and acquaintance would laugh at and despise me. When meeting was over I thought to speak to the preacher, but such a crowd got round him, disputing points of doctrine, that I could not conveniently get an opportunity. That evening I set up family prayer, it being the first time I ever had attempted to pray in my family. My wife, being a strict Presbyterian, was a praying woman, and much pleased with having family prayer, so that she proved a great help to me and endeavored to encourage me in my duty; although, dear creature, at that time she knew nothing of experimental religion."

Thus did this rough but earnest soul struggle as in "the hour and power of darkness." The next day, accompanied by his sympathetic wife, he went more than ten miles to a Methodist assembly; he appealed to the itinerant for counsel and comfort, asking to be baptized, hoping it would relieve his distress, for he had yet no idea of justification by faith. "Are you a Quaker?" asked the preacher. "No," he replied, "I am nothing but a poor, wretched, condemned sinner," and burst into tears. The preacher comforted him with the promises of the Gospel. "He then said I was the very man that Christ died for, or he would not have awakened me. That it was the lost Christ came to seek, and the greatest of sinners he came to save, and commanded me to believe." That night (the 11th of October, 1772, for he is minute in such memorable dates) he awoke from terrible dreams and saw, as in a vision of faith, the Lord Jesus, with extended arms, saying, "I died for you." He wept and adored God with a joyful heart.

'At that moment," he says, "the Scriptures were wonderfully opened to my understanding. My heart felt as light as a bird, being relieved of that load of guilt which before had bowed down my spirits, and my body felt as active as when I was eighteen, so that the outward and inward man were both animated." He rose, and calling up the family, expounded the Scriptures and prayed, and then set off to spend the day in telling his neighbors what God had done for him. He had singular rencounters before night. "While I was telling them," he writes, "my experience, and exhorting them to flee from the wrath to come, some laughed and others cried, and some thought I had gone distracted. Before night a report was spread all through the neighborhood that I was raving mad." Rustic polemic discussions, imputations of self-deception and madness, met him on every hand. A neighboring clergyman tried laboriously to deliver him from the "strong delusions of the devil." The honest man was becoming perplexed. "It was suggested to my mind," he says, "he may be right." "But," he adds, "I went a little out of the road, and kneeled down and prayed to God if I was deceived to undeceive me; and the Lord said to me, 'Why do you doubt? Is not Christ all-sufficient? is he not able? Have you not felt his blood applied?' I then sprang upon my feet and cried out, not all the devils in hell should make me doubt; for I knew that I was converted: at that instant I was filled with unspeakable raptures of joy."

Benjamin Abbott had thus placed his feet securely in "the path of life." He had reached it indeed through darkness and terrors, stumbled into it, it may be said, through errors, morbid agitations, if not temporary insanity; but had evidently attained, at last, the fundamental truth of the Reformation and of Christianity,

justification by faith; and he now and henceforth, till his last hour, stood out in the light, with unshakable steadfastness, on this rock of divine truth, a saved, a consecrated, a triumphant man.

He was soon to be tested by one of the severest trials, one that touched his tenderest Christian affections, and which was associated with an example of those mysterious workings of his strange mind that startle us so much in his autobiography; but his simple faith and good sense saved him. "Toward the dawn of day," he says, "in a dream I thought I saw the preacher, under whom I was awakened, drunk and playing cards, with his garments all defiled with dirt. When I awoke and found it a dream I was glad, although I still felt some uneasiness on his account. In about three weeks after I heard that the poor unfortunate preacher had fallen into sundry gross sins, and was expelled from the Methodist connection. The tidings of his fall filled me with such distress that I wandered about like a lost sheep with these reflections: If the head is thus fallen what will become of me, or what combats may I have with the devil? At length, when in prayer, under sore temptation, almost in despair, a new thought was impressed on my mind, that I must not trust in the arm of flesh, for, 'Cursed is he that putteth his trust in the arm of flesh.' I then saw that my salvation did not depend on his standing or falling; I had to stand for myself, and to give diligence, through grace, to save my own soul; that my soul must answer at the bar of God for my own deeds."

The fact here referred to has the peculiar and painful interest of being the first instance of apostasy that dishonored the struggling ministry of Methodism in the new world; its first case of expulsion. The name of Abraham Whitworth appears in the list of the little

band of itinerants reported in the appointments of the first Methodist Conference. He was an Englishman, and had labored faithfully with his countrymen Webb, Asbury, and Shadford, in New Jersey, during the year 1772. His eloquence was powerful, and his usefulness extraordinary. It was under his ardent ministrations that Abbott had been saved. He subsequently preached with continued success on both the Eastern and Western Shores of Maryland. While on the Kent Circuit he fell by intemperance, and fell apparently to rise no more. "Alas for that man!" wrote Asbury, when the sad news reached him, "he had been useful, but was puffed up, and so fell into the snare of the devil." Years later, when Asbury first heard Abbott preach, he wrote, "here I find remains the fruit of the labor of that now miserable man Abraham Whitworth; I fear he died a backslider." The last trace we can discover of the fate of the unfortunate man is in the report of "the old Methodists," that he entered the British army to fight against the country and was probably killed in battle.[7]

Abbott now devoted himself to the study of the Bible, and to "exhort all that" he "had any intercourse with." He tells the story of his daily life with entertaining *naiveté* and honesty. The Scriptures "were wonderfully opened" to him. In his sleep texts occurred to his mind, with divisions and applications, and he woke up preaching from them. His good wife checked him, saying "you are always preaching;" "however," he adds, "it caused her to ponder these things in her heart. I saw that if ever I should win her to Christ it must be by love, and a close walk with God; for I observed that she watched me closely." He soon won her; Philip Gatch arrived; she was converted after hearing him preach,

[7] Lednum, p. 129.

and when Abbott returned home he met her at the door with tears of joy in her eyes. "We embraced each other,' he says, "and she cried out, 'Now I know what you told me is true, for the Lord hath pardoned my sins.' We had a blessed meeting; it was the happiest day we had ever seen together. 'Now,' said she, 'I am willing to be a Methodist too;' from that time we went on, hand and hand, helping and building each other up in the Lord. These were the beginning of days to us. Our children also began to yield obedience to the Lord, and in the course of about three months after my wife's conversion we had six children converted to God."

From "exhorting" he at last began to preach; his first sermon was over the coffin of a neighbor. His word was now uniformly "with power;" the sturdiest sinners trembled, or escaped in alarm from his mongrel assemblies. He was a man of great natural courage, and though there was an unction of habitual tenderness and humility in his manners, often revealing itself in tears, yet woe to the man who dared in his presence to treat religion with ridicule or irreverence. His indignant exhortations overwhelmed and swept before him any such offender. He was an example of what the evangelical historians report of the apostolic ministry: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus." On one of his walks of prayer and exhortation he met an old friend, who invited him to dinner. He went, and when they were about sitting down at the table he proposed to ask a blessing; as soon as he began two journeymen burst out laughing: "at which," he says, "I arose and began to exhort them all in a very rough manner, thundering out hell and damnation against the un-

godly with tears in my eyes. This broke up dinner, and neither of us eat anything." But a young woman present was much affected, and entreated him to visit her mother; the honest man went, palpitating with his holy indignation, but was soon in a happier mood. "The old lady," he writes, "and I fell into conversation. She was a pious Moravian. I was truly glad that I had found a witness for Jesus. She knew that God, for Christ's sake, had freely forgiven her sins. We had a comfortable time in conversing together on the things of God. She told me that I was the first person she had met with, in that place, who could testify that his sins were forgiven. I left her, with strong impressions on my mind, to preach the Gospel." "On one occasion while I was speaking with great zeal," he continues, "and exclaiming against the various abominations of the people, and pointing out their enormous sins, I cried out, 'For aught I know there may be a murderer in this congregation!' Immediately a lusty man attempted to go out, but when he got to the door he bawled out, and stretched out both his arms and ran backward, as though some one had been before him pressing on him to take his life, and he endeavored to defend himself from the attack, until he got to the far side of the room, and then falling backward against the wall lodged on a chest, and cried out very bitterly, and said, 'He was the murderer, for he had killed a man about fifteen years before.' Thus he lay and cried with great anguish of soul. This surprised me so much that I stopped preaching; the people were greatly alarmed, and looked on the man with the utmost astonishment. After a short pause, I went on again and finished my discourse. The man, who was in this wonderful manner wrought upon, recovered himself and went away, and I never have seen or heard of him since."

A Society was now formed in his neighborhood, he becoming its Class-Leader; it was soon included in the circuit, and Methodism was permanently established in that region. Abbott spread it out in all directions. He broke up the ground around him for fifteen miles. He worked for his livelihood on week-days, held prayer and Class-meetings at night, and preached on Sundays. No itinerant in New Jersey did more to found securely the denomination in the State. He was its first Methodist convert that preached the Gospel. Asbury said, "he is a man of uncommon zeal, and of good utterance; his words come with great power." We shall have occasion to follow him hereafter in his extending labors and surprising successes.

Still another native preacher began his labors in 1773, though his name was not recorded in the list of Conference appointments till the following year. Daniel Ruff was converted in Harford County, Maryland, in the great religious excitement which prevailed in that and in Baltimore Counties during 1771. The next year his house, near Havre de Grace, became a "preaching-place" for the itinerants, and the year following Ruff himself became noted as an exhorter and local preacher, warning his neighbors to "flee from the wrath to come, and bringing many of them to the Saviour."[8] He was a man of sterling integrity, great simplicity, and remarkable usefulness. Asbury, visiting his neighborhood, March 4, 1774, rejoiced over his success, and preached on the appropriate text, "The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad." "Honest, simple Daniel Ruff," he wrote, "has been made a great blessing to these people. Such is the wisdom and power of God that he has wrought marvelously by this plain man that no flesh may

[8] Lednum, p. 121.

glory in his presence." Joining the Conference in 1774, Ruff traveled Chester Circuit, which then comprised all the Methodist appointments in the State of Delaware and in Chester County, Pa. He labored also in New Jersey. Freeborn Garrettson, one of the most successful preachers of Methodism, was converted after hearing one of his sermons, and Ruff first called him into the itineracy.[9] Ruff was the first native preacher appointed to Wesley Chapel in New York.

Such were the principal native evangelists who began to appear in the field about the time of the first American Conference. But let us return to their more prominent fellow-laborers from whom we parted at that humble but memorable session. There are but few and vague reminiscences of their labors, but they are too precious to be lost.

[9] Wakeley, p. 256.

CHAPTER IX.

PRINCIPAL EVANGELISTS, 1773–1774.

Rankin after the Conference — Pilmoor — Boardman — Rankin in Maryland — A Quarterly Meeting at the Watters Homestead — Departure of Pilmoor — Rankin in New York — Shadford in New York — His Character and Usefulness — Asbury in Maryland — Exaltation of his Spirit — Baltimore — Otterbein — German Methodism — "United Brethren in Christ" — Sketch of their History — Death of Otterbein — Boehm and Gueting — Otterbein and Asbury's Poetry: Note — Advancement of Methodism in Maryland — New Chapels — Wright in Virginia — Its first two Chapels — Williams in Virginia — Old Brunswick Circuit — Jarratt — Jesse Lee — Freeborn Garrettson.

Of the labors of the principal evangelists during the ecclesiastical year following the Conference of 1773 we have but scanty intimations; enough, however, to show that they resumed their work with a strong consciousness that it had now become an established fact in the religious history of the country; that, being organized and put under the rigorous military discipline of Wesley, it was destined to deepen and widen, and assume the same importance which Methodism had acquired in the parent land. They went forth therefore to their circuits with the increased zeal, not to say enthusiasm, which such confidence was suited to inspire; "with a full resolution," wrote Rankin, "to spread genuine Methodism in public and in private with all our might."

Rankin and Shadford were appointed, as we have seen, respectively to Philadelphia and New York, but were to exchange during the year. Rankin's spirit glowed with renewed ardor as he closed the Conference. "For some days past," he wrote, "I have felt the Redeemer's

presence in a most sensible manner; I want more life, light, and love; I want to be entirely devoted to God, and to walk before him as Enoch and Abraham did." Pilmoor, though without an appointment, lingered with him some time in Philadelphia. On the last Sunday of the month of the Conference (July 29, 1773) Rankin writes: "I preached at the usual hours, morning and evening, and afterward met the Society. In some good degree this has been a Sabbath of rest to my soul. Blessed forever be the name of the Lord for all his mercies! I long to be holy in life and in all manner of conversation. I was assisted by the labors of Mr. Pilmoor the ensuing week, having returned from a journey in the country. He preached with more life and divine power this week than he has done since I landed at Philadelphia. Blessed be God that he is returning to the simplicity of spirit that made him so useful when he first came over to America! Whatever we lose, let us never lose that simplicity which is attended with life, light, love, and power from on high. If ever a Methodist preacher loses this temper the glory is departed from him."

Pilmoor continued to assist him, both in Philadelphia and New York, down to the end of December. Success attended their efforts, and the spirit of Rankin rose with his labors. His "soul intensely breathed after full conformity to the blessed God." "O how I long," he wrote, "to see the work of God break out on the right hand and on the left!" Though superintendent of the whole American field, he gave faithful attention to the local and particular interests of the Societies, "visiting all the classes" while in New York. Boardman was there to aid him in October. On Sunday, 10th, when about to leave the city, he records that Boardman

"preached this morning, and I in the evening. I found a measure of liberty, but abundantly more in the love-feast which followed. The Lord did sit as a refiner's fire on many hearts. I would fain hope that he is reviving his work in the hearts of the people. Indeed, from the testimony of many this evening, I had reason to believe that the great Head of the Church was better to us than all my fears. I hear no particular complaint of any member; and I find several have of late found peace with God, while others are greatly stirred up to seek all the mind that was in Christ Jesus. I also gave notes of admission to several new members. My own soul breathed after entire conformity to her living head. My cry was, 'Give me, O Lord, constant union and deep fellowship with thee. O let me bear the image of the blessed Jesus, and fill me with all the fullness of God!'"

He returned to Philadelphia, and in the latter part of the month set out southward. At the beginning of November he was holding a quarterly meeting at the Watters homestead. The regions round about poured out their people on the occasion. "Such a season," he says, "I have not seen since I came to America. The Lord made the place of his feet glorious. The shout of a king was heard in our camp. I rode to Bush Chapel, and preached at three o'clock. There also the Lord made bare his holy arm. From the chapel I rode to Dellam's, and preached at six o'clock, and we concluded the day with prayer and praise. This has indeed been a day of the Son of man. To thy name, O Lord, be the praise and glory! Monday, November 1. I rode to Deer Creek, and preached at three, and afterward met the Society. The flame of divine love went from heart to heart, and great was our glorying in God our Saviour. I spent the

evening in praise and prayer with many of our friends who had come to attend the quarterly meeting. Wednesday, 3. After breakfast we finished our temporal business, and spent some time with the local preachers and stewards. At ten o'clock our general love-feast began. It was now that the heavens were opened and the skies poured down divine righteousness. The inheritance of God was watered with the rain from heaven. I had not seen such a season as this since I left my native land. Now it was that the Lord burst the cloud which had at times rested upon my mind ever since I landed at Philadelphia. O Lord, my soul shall praise thee, and all that is within me shall bless thy holy name! I sincerely hope that many will remember this day throughout the annals of eternity."

By the middle of December he was again in Philadelphia, where Pilmoor still assisted him. On Sunday, the 26th, Pilmoor "preached his farewell sermon, and we concluded the day with a general love-feast. The presence of the Holy One of Israel was in the midst, and many rejoiced in the hope of the glory of God. Next day he set off for New York, from whence Mr. Boardman and he were to sail for England. Yet a little while and we shall meet to part no more."

In March, 1774, we trace Rankin to New York, still exulting in the success of his work. On the 6th he writes: "The congregations were large, and the presence of the Holy One of Israel was in our midst. Surely I shall yet have pleasure in this city to compensate for all my pain. I went through the duties of the ensuing week with pleasure. I observed that the labors of my fellow-laborer, Mr. Shadford, have not been in vain. The spirit of love seems to increase among the people. Sunday, May 22. I found freedom to declare the word of the

Lord, and I trust the seed sown will produce some fruit to the glory of God. We concluded the evening with a general love-feast, in which the Lord's presence was powerfully felt by many persons. Many declared with great freedom what God had done for their souls. Some of the poor black people spoke with power and pungency of the loving-kindness of the Lord. If the rich in this Society were as much devoted to God as the poor are, we should see wonders done in the city. Holy Jesus, there is nothing impossible with thee."

The next day he was on his way to Philadelphia, "to meet the brethren in our second little Conference." Such are the few traces I can discover of Rankin's services during this period. His head-quarters being alternately in Philadelphia and New York, did not limit him to those cities; he itinerated not only between them, exchanging every four months, but around them on extensive circuits. He adopted fully Asbury's views of the itinerancy, not only enforcing them in his administration as Wesley's "General Assistant," but exemplifying them in his own labors.

Meanwhile Shadford began his work for the ecclesiastical year in New York with an ardor equal, if not superior, to that of Rankin. He had a soul of flame, and was singularly effective in his preaching. "A volume might be written," says the chronicler of John-street Chapel, "concerning Mr. Shadford. He had a great harvest of souls in America."[1] And, again, writes the same authority, "Most powerful revivals accompanied his ministry. His preaching was in the demonstration of the Spirit and with power. Moral miracles were performed, hell's dark empire shook, and victory was proclaimed on the Lord's side. He was a very sweet-spirited brother, and the

[1] Wakeley, chap. 25.

love subsisting between him and Asbury was like that between Jonathan and David."

Shadford, though a courageous preacher, was modest even to diffidence, and entered New York with painful self-distrust. He has left us a brief record of his labors there. "My next remove," he says, "was to New York, where I spent four months with great satisfaction. I went thither with fear and trembling, and was much cast down from a sense of my unworthiness and inability to preach the Gospel to a polite and sensible people. But the Lord, who hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the things which are wise, and weak things to confound the things which are mighty, condescended to make use of his poor weak servant for the revival of religion in that city. I added fifty members in those four months, about twenty of whom found the pardoning love of God, and several backsliders were restored to their first love. A vehement desire was excited in the hearts of believers after all the mind of Christ, or the whole image of God. I left in New York two hundred and four members in society." Exchanging with Rankin, he went to Philadelphia, where he says, "I had a very comfortable time for four or five months that I spent with a loving, teachable people. The blessing of the Lord was with us of a truth, and many were really converted to God. There was a sweet loving spirit in this Society; for nothing appeared among them but peace and brotherly love. They had kept prayer-meetings in different parts of the city for some time before I went to it, which had been a great means of begetting life among the people of God as well as others." He preached in the streets and lanes of the city, and left it at the end of the year, with two hundred and twenty-four members in its Society. His first year's labor in America had added nearly two hundred to the Church, "while

hundreds had been benefited in various ways under his labors."[2]

With his usual promptness Asbury was in the saddle, on the last day of the Conference of 1773, leaving Philadelphia for his great Baltimore Circuit, and praying, "May the Lord make bare his holy arm, and revive his glorious work!" He preached continually on his route, and the next week writes, "My soul has enjoyed great peace this last week, in which I have rode near one hundred miles since my departure from Philadelphia, and have preached often, and sometimes great solemnity has rested on the congregations. On Tuesday morning my heart was still with the Lord, and my peace flowed as a river. Glory be given to God! On Wednesday, at New Castle, the company was but small, though great power attended the word. Perhaps the Lord will yet visit this people, though at present too many of them appear to be devoted to pride, vanity, and folly." He soon reached his circuit, for it comprehended all the Societies in Maryland, and nearly half the Methodists of the country. On August 2d he held a Quarterly Meeting at Joseph Presbury's. "After our temporal business was done," he says, "I read a part of our minutes, to see if Brother Strawbridge would conform, but he appeared to be inflexible. He would not administer the ordinances under our direction at all. Many things were said on the subject, and a few of the people took part with him. At the conclusion of our Quarterly Meeting, on Tuesday, we had a comfortable season, and many were refreshed, especially in the love-feast. On Wednesday I set out for Baltimore, but was taken very sick on the road; however, I pursued my way, though it was sometimes through hard rain and heavy thunder, and preached in Baltimore on Thursday,

[2] Lednum, p. 112.

in Mrs. Tribulet's new house, which she freely lent for that purpose. There appeared to be a considerable moving under the word. Many people attend the preaching in Baltimore, especially after we have been long enough in town for the inhabitants to receive full knowledge of our being there; and I have a great hope that the Lord will do something for the souls in this place, though the little Society has been rather neglected, for want of proper persons to lead them. I went to Charles Harriman's, and settled two classes in that neighborhood. While preaching there the Lord favored us with a lively and profitable season. My mind has lately been much tortured with temptations; but the Lord has stood by and delivered me. O, my God! when will my trials end? At death. Lord, be ever with me, and save me, or my soul must perish at last. But my trust is still in God, that he will ever help me to conquer all my foes." Asbury continued his travels on this circuit during the ecclesiastical year with no little success, but with much physical disability, suffering most of the time from fever and ague, going to and fro among his twenty-four appointments, and preaching in the intermissions of his disease. His spirit was exalted meanwhile with religious fervor. "The spirit of holy peace reigns in my heart," he writes; "Glory be to God!" "My soul longs for all the fullness of God. When shall it once be? When shall my soul be absorbed in purity and love?" "My soul longs and pants for God!" "Glory to God, my mind is kept in sweet peace, and deeply engaged in every duty." "My mind has been much stayed in God for some time past, and my body has felt little weariness, though on some days I have preached four times." Such are the ever-recurring phrases of his Journals. Occasionally, however, he records deep dejection, the effect of his

malady and of the peculiar embarrassments of the incipient condition of the Societies he was almost everywhere forming. Baltimore itself contained about this time five Churches, Roman Catholic, Episcopal or English, Lutheran, and Quaker. The Rev. Mr. Otterbein, of the Lutheran Church, whose name occurs frequently in the early history of Methodism, was settled over a new congregation, partly through the influence of Asbury, early in the following year. Rev. Mr. Swoop, whom Asbury describes as "a good man," was pastor of the Lutheran, and Rev. Mr. Chase of the Episcopal Churches. St. Paul's, in which the latter ministered, was built in 1744, and was the first church in the city. Such was the ecclesiastical *status* of the town of Baltimore at this period.[3] The first Methodist Chapel was not yet opened, but was begun. In the last week of November, 1773, Asbury writes: "I have been able to officiate at the town and Point every day, and the congregations rather increase. Lord, make me humble and more abundantly useful; and give me the hearts of the people that I may conduct them to thee! I feel great hopes that the God of mercy will interpose, and do these dear people good. This day we agreed with Mr. L. to undertake the brick-work of our new building, at the Point. At night I was seized with a violent fever; and as many of my friends thought it improper for me to go immediately into the circuit, I concluded to abide for a season in town. Many are under some awakenings here, and they are very kind and affectionate to me. My heart is with the Lord. He is my all in all." A fortnight later he says: "While preaching at the Point, there was great solemnity very visible in the congregation. The power of God was eminently present, and one person fell under

[3] Rev. Dr. Coggeshall, MS. Life, etc., of Asbury, chap. 3.

it. Such numbers of people attended to hear the word to-day, in town, that we knew not how to accommodate them." Meanwhile he was refreshed with good news from his fellow-laborers. "Richard Owen informed me that the work of God was gaining ground in Frederick County. My soul was happy in God. Brother W. brought good accounts from the country, where the congregations are large, and some coming to the Lord." He begins the new year sick, but successful. "My body has been indisposed for some days past; but the grace of God has rested on my soul, and I have been enabled to preach several times with freedom, power, and great boldness, the Lord being my helper. Feeling rather better to-day, I ventured to ride in a chaise ten miles. Returned the next day, and continued unwell—sometimes being confined to my bed for a day together; yet I preached at other times to large congregations. It frequently appears as if almost the whole town would come together to hear the word of the Lord. Surely it will not be altogether in vain. The Lord giveth me great patience, and all things richly to enjoy, with many very kind friends, who pay great attention to me in my affliction. Among others, Mr. Swoop, a preacher in high Dutch, came to see me. He appeared to be a good man, and I opened to him the plan of Methodism."

Swoop and Otterbein now became his steadfast friends. In May, 1774, he records that he "had a friendly intercourse with Mr. Otterbein and Mr. Swoop, the German ministers, respecting the plan of Church discipline on which they intended to proceed. They agreed to imitate our method as nearly as possible." A significant allusion is this, foreshadowing a new and important development of Methodism which has continued, with advancing prosperity, to our day, achieving no little usefulness,

especially among the German population of the Middle and Western States, and well deserving here an episodical notice at the risk of some delay in our narrative.

Otterbein was born in 1726, at Dillenburg, Nassau, on the upper Rhine. The son of pious and intelligent parents, he was theologically and classically educated, and ordained to the ministry of the German Reformed Church. In 1752 he came to America. In the then wilderness region of Lancaster, Pa., he perceived, in his solitary meditations, that there was a higher religious life than he had attained or been taught, and he became a regenerated and sanctified man. His new faith and zeal incurred persecution from his brethren, and he was precluded from some of their pulpits. Asbury met him in Maryland, and aided him to secure the pastoral charge of a new Church in Baltimore. He now "agreed to imitate our methods as nearly as possible," and soon became the founder of "The United Brethren in Christ," sometimes called "The German Methodists." His zeal was ardent, and his preaching eloquent, clear, and persuasive. He held special prayer-meetings, a custom unknown in his Church at that day. "The opposition from his own brethren continued some years; but amid the severe conflict he stood, prophet-like, firmly resolving to follow the direction of heaven. Nor was he suffered long to stand alone. God was pleased to call to his help Martin Boehm, George A. Gueting, Christopher Grost, Christian Newcomer, Andrew Zeller, George Pfeimer, John Neidig, Joseph Huffman, Jacob Bowlus, and other holy men. The purity and simplicity with which these reformers preached the Gospel induced many to hear the word, and numbers became the happy subjects of converting grace. Large meetings were appointed in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. Lutherans, German Reformed, Mennonites,

and others came together with one accord. Otterbein ardently loved the Church in which he had been ordained, and remained in its communion as long as there was a prospect of his usefulness; but that hope at last vanished. The synod to which he belonged apparently parted with him without regret. Thus originated the 'United Brethren in Christ'—it was no secession from the German Reformed Church. Their first Conference was held at Baltimore in the year 1789, the following preachers being present: William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, George A. Gueting, Christian Newcomer, Adam Lohman, John Ernst, Henry Weidner."[4]

Asbury and his Methodist coadjutors co-operated harmoniously with these good men. Otterbein assisted Dr. Coke in the episcopal consecration of Asbury.

The German brethren increased rapidly, numerous Societies were formed, and in 1800 an Annual Conference assembled in Maryland. Otterbein and Boehm were elected Superintendents, or Bishops, of the infant Church. "Baltimore was the home of Otterbein, where his old and honored tabernacle still stands, and is occupied by his successors in faith and labors. From increasing years and their infirmities he was, late in life, unable to travel, but his mind seemed to be inspired with new strength while pleading with God for the prosperity of his people. His soul was occupied with the thought, 'Shall the work stand and endure the fiery test? and will it ultimately prosper after my departure?' Shortly before his death he had a delightful interview with his brethren, Newcomer and Bowlus, when he told them, 'The Lord has been pleased graciously to satisfy me fully that the work will abide.' Otterbein was large, and very commanding in his personal appearance, with a prominent forehead, upon

[4] G. P. Disosway to the author.

which the seal of the Lord seemed to be plainly impressed. His Christian kindness and benevolence knew no bounds, and all he received, like Wesley, he gave away in charities. 'We are brethren,' was his favorite motto. During twenty-six years he resided in Germany, and sixty-one in America; the latter were entirely devoted to preaching Christ. He was a ripe scholar in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, philosophy, and divinity. Through God's blessing he founded the Church of the 'United Brethren in Christ.' Bishop Asbury thus spoke of him when preaching the funeral sermon of Martin Boehm: 'Pre-eminent among these is William Otterbein. He is one of the best scholars and greatest divines in America, . . . and now his sun of life is setting in brightness. Behold the saint of God leaning upon his staff, waiting for the chariots of Israel.' Of the three earliest fathers of the 'United Brethren in Christ,' Martin Boehm was permitted to proclaim Christ until within a short time before his death. His last illness was brief, and, raising himself on his dying bed, he sung a verse, praising God with a loud voice, when he committed his soul to the Redeemer in solemn prayer, and died March 2, 1812. He was eighty-seven years old, fifty of which had been devoted to the preaching of the Cross. He gave a son to the Methodist itinerancy, who for years was Asbury's traveling companion, and still lingers, a patriarch of the Church. George A. Gueting followed him to the reward of the faithful on the 28th of the next June. His sickness, too, lasted but a short night and day. Sensible that the hour of his deliverance was at hand, he desired to be taken from the dying couch, read a verse, singing it with a clear voice, and then, kneeling by his bedside, he breathed his last prayer and bade the world adieu, in the full triumph of the Christian faith. Forty years of his life were spent in

calling sinners to repentance. William Otterbein, as he was the first, was also the last of the three, for he finished his useful and holy pilgrimage on the 17th of November, 1813, aged eighty-eight, full of years and hope of a glorious immortality."

On receiving word of his death Asbury exclaimed, "Is Father Otterbein dead? Great and good man of God! An honor to his Church and country; one of the greatest scholars and divines that ever came to America or was born in it. Alas! the chiefs of the Germans are gone to their rest and reward—taken from the evil to come."[5]

Following from the beginning some of the special methods of Methodism, the "United Brethren" have at last grown into a considerable denomination, quite analagous to the Methodist Episcopal Church. "Their sixteenth Annual Conference was held at Mount Pleasant, Westmoreland county, Pa., on the 6th of June, 1815, when they adopted a discipline, which was mainly an abridgment of that of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as will appear from the facts, that they have Quarterly, Annual, and General Conferences, with bishops, presiding elders, probation, and course of study, the follow-

[5] Letter of Asbury, Nov. 1813.—He was one of Asbury's most confidential counselors through life. "We have no doubt that to Mr. Otterbein our Bishop was indebted for much good counsel, as well as for example and encouragement. One anecdote, which has probably never been published, will show how faithful a friend the good German was. Mr. Asbury wrote a good many verses, though, of all men, he would seem to have been least susceptible to the poetical afflatus. Some of his friends were anxious that he should publish, but before giving consent the Bishop consulted his friend Otterbein. The old gentleman read the manuscript, and when Mr. Asbury came for his opinion, said, 'Brother Asbury, I don't think you was born a poet.' The Bishop had the good sense to burn the papers, and our Church was saved from a volume of inelegant verse. We cannot but admire the faithfulness of Otterbein and the resolute submission of Asbury."—*Balt. Ch. Advocate.*

ing forming a part of the course: Wesley's Sermons, Watson's Institutes, Fletcher's Appeal and Checks, Powell on Apostolical Succession, Clark's Theology, etc., etc. The duties of the preacher having charge of the circuit, the questions asked, and the instructions given, 'Be serious,' 'Never be unemployed,' 'Never trifle away your time,' 'Converse sparingly; conduct yourself prudently with women;' 'Your business is to save as many souls as possible,'" etc., are Methodistic.[6]

In our day the "United Brethren in Christ" report 30 Conferences, nearly 1,300 Preachers, more than 82,000 communicants, nearly 900 chapels, 357 districts, 208 missions, about 1,300 Sunday-schools with 50,000 scholars, a university named after Otterbein, and a Book Concern, with three periodical publications.[7]

Asbury then was doing far-reaching good in Maryland in these early times. Assisted by several local preachers and exhorters, he kept his extensive circuit active with interest, and such was his success that by the end of the year the number of Methodists in his Societies was more than doubled, being 1,063, a gain of 563. At a Quarterly Meeting in February, 1774, the large field was divided into four Circuits, Baltimore, Baltimore Town, Frederick, and Kent; and eight laborers were designated to it. No less than five chapels were built or building about this time, two of them in Baltimore, one at the Point, and the other in the town proper. The first, on Strawberry Alley, has already been noticed; the second was on Lovely Lane and was to be rendered memorable as the seat of the council which organized the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1784. It was located on a small street, which

[6] Letter of Rev. Henry Jones, Wisconsin, to the author.
[7] Schem's "Year-Book," pp. 34–36.

ran east and west between Calvert and South streets. The location was a good one at the time, being in the center of a large population, within a convenient distance from Baltimore-street, and about a square and a half from the present Light-street Church, which sprung from it. Asbury, previous to his departure northward, laid the foundation of the new building on the 18th of April, and by the middle of October the house was so far finished that, as we have seen, Captain Webb, who was on a visit to Baltimore, preached in it. In March, 1775, Asbury had the satisfaction of seeing it completed, and on the 21st of May, 1776, the Conference met there, for the first time in Baltimore.[8] Asbury left at least thirty Societies in Maryland. Preachers and exhorters were rising up numerously among them. The denomination had struck its roots ineradicably in the soil of the state.

Wright had been successfully at work, meanwhile, in Virginia, and on the 9th of May, 1774, on his return, he cheered Asbury with good news. "Mr. Wright," he says, "arrived to-day from Virginia. He gave us a circumstantial account of the work of God in those parts. One house of worship is built, and another in contemplation; two or three more preachers are gone out upon the itinerant plan; and in some parts the congregations consist of two or three thousand people. But some evil-minded persons have opposed the act of toleration, and threatened to imprison him. May the Lord turn their hearts and make them partakers of his great salvation!" The first church here mentioned became famous in after years as "Yeargon's Chapel," the first Methodist edifice in Virginia; it was located near the southern line of the State,[9] and was the outpost of the denomination, at this time, for the further South. The other structure was in

[8] Rev. Dr. Hamilton to the Author. [9] Lednum, p. 117.

Sussex County, the second in the state, well known as "Lane's Chapel."

Williams also traveled in Virginia during this "Conference year," having been appointed to Petersburg Circuit. It extended into North Carolina, and took the title of Brunswick Circuit at the next Conference, a name of renown in the early Methodist annals. He reported from it at the Conference 218 members. About a year had passed since his first introduction to Jarratt, and his hospitable reception under the roof of the good rector; the wide-spread excitement which then attended his labors had continued with increasing intensity. "The next year, 1774, others of his brethren," says Jarratt, "came and gathered many Societies, both in this neighborhood and in other places, as far as North Carolina. They now began to ride the circuit, and to take care of the Societies already formed, which was rendered a happy means both of deepening and spreading the work of God." Jarratt was, in fine, opening the way for Methodism through the Province. "I am persuaded," said Asbury, some years later, "that there have been more souls convinced by his ministry than by that of any other man in Virginia."

It was about the present time that an important family, converted under Jarratt's ministry, joined the Methodists, on Williams's Circuit, and opened their house as one of his preaching stations. A youthful son of the household was preparing to become one of the chieftains of the new cause, its founder in the New England States, and its first historian. Jesse Lee was converted in 1773, and the next year his name was enrolled among the members of Williams's Societies.[10]

About the same time another young man, in Maryland,

[10] Jesse Lee's Life of John Lee, p. 12.

was struggling with his awakened conscience, for God was summoning him to eminent services in the Methodistic movement. "The Spirit of the Lord," he says, "at times strove very powerfully with me, and I was frequently afraid that all was not well with me, especially when I was under Methodist preaching. To these people I was drawn; but it was like death to me, for I thought I had rather serve God in any other way than among them, while at the same time something within would tell me they were right. Being amazingly agitated in mind, I at length came to this conclusion, to give up my former pursuits, bend my mind to the improvement of my worldly property, and serve God in a private manner. I now set out in full pursuit of business, with an expectation of accumulating the riches of the world." "But one day," he later writes, "being at a distance from home, I met with a zealous Methodist exhorter. He asked me if I was born again? I told him I had a hope that I was. Do you know, said he, that your sins are forgiven? No, replied I, neither do I expect that knowledge in this world. I perceive, said he, that you are on the broad road to hell, and if you die in this state you will be damned. The Scripture, said I, tells us that the tree is known by its fruit; and our Lord likewise condemns rash judgment. What have you seen or known of my life that induces you to judge me in such a manner? I pity you, said I, and turned my back on him; but I could not easily forget the words of that pious young man, for they were as spears running through me."[11] Freeborn Garrettson's mind was thus irresistibly directed to a life of religious self-sacrifice and labor, which have rendered his name forever memorable. In a short time we shall meet him again, as one of the most successful itinerant

[11] Bangs's Life of Garrettson, p. 34.

champions of the Methodistic movement. For more than half a century the record of his life is to be substantially a history of his denomination.

In the Spring of 1774 the dispersed itinerants wended their way again toward Philadelphia for their second Conference.

CHAPTER X.

CONFERENCE AND PROGRESS OF 1774.

The Conference of 1774 — Rankin's Disciplinary Rigor — Asbury — Watters and Gatch — Statistics — Progress in the Middle Colonies — The Itinerancy — Its Effect on the Ministry — Asbury's Sufferings and Labors in New York — In Philadelphia — In Baltimore — Otterbein — Williams's Success in Virginia — Asbury and the Revolution — Perry Hall and Henry Dorsey Gough — Rankin at Quarterly Meetings in Maryland — Shadford in Maryland — Remarkable Incident — Robert Lindsey — Edward Dromgoole — Richard Webster — Their Success — Philip Gatch on Frederick Circuit — Shadford's Rule for Effective Preaching — Gatch on Kent Circuit — Hostile Rencounters — "Parson Kain" — Gatch's Success — He returns to Frederick Circuit — Attacked by Ruffians — Enters New Jersey — Whitworth and Ebert — Benjamin Abbott in New Jersey — An Encounter at Deerfield — Sanctification — Abbott in Salem — His Treatment of Diseased Minds — His Success — Physical Phenomena of Religious Excitement — John King and Robert Williams in Virginia — Jesse Lee — Jarratt — Great Success — Additional Missionaries from England — James Dempster — Martin Rodda — William Glendenning — Asbury and Rankin.

The second Conference met in Philadelphia, May 25, 1774, and continued till Friday the 27th. The disciplinary views of Rankin, enforced during the preceding year, upon the preachers and Societies, with a rigor which seemed to some of them hardly tolerable, had produced salutary effects generally, as evinced by the growing efficiency of the denomination, and an unexpected increase of its members. It had been regulated and consolidated, and now presented generally an attitude of strength which gave assurance of a prosperous future. Rankin insisted with English firmness, if not obstinacy, that the method of procedure established in the British

Conference should be rigorously followed by the present session. The principles of his administration were good, and necessary for the infant Church; but he seems to have been unhappy in his official manners. He had not the tact of Asbury to adapt himself to the free and easy spirit of the Americans, whose democratic colonial training had thrown off punctiliousness without impairing their energy and devotion to general order. Even Asbury hesitated at his rigor, but was conciliated by seeing his own judgment followed in detail, though "stubbornly opposed" at first. Errors in favor of discipline were, however, faults which Asbury could most readily forgive. "It is," he wrote, "my duty to bear all things with a meek and patient spirit. Our Conference was attended with great power; and, all things considered, with great harmony. We agreed to send Mr. Wright to England, and all acquiesced in the future stations of the preachers. My body and mind have been much fatigued during the time of this Conference. And if I were not deeply conscious of the truth and goodness of the cause in which I am engaged I should by no means stay here. Lord, what a world is this! yea, what a religious world! O keep my heart pure, and my garments unspotted from the world! Our Conference ended on Friday with a comfortable intercession." Rankin says of the session, "Everything considered, we had reason to bless God for what he had done in about ten months. Above a thousand members are added to the Societies, and most of these have found peace with God. We now labor in the provinces of New York, the Jerseys, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. We spoke our minds freely, one to another in love; and whatever we thought would further the work we most cheerfully embraced. We had now more than seventeen preachers to be employed

the ensuing year, and upward of two thousand members, with calls and openings into many fresh places. We stationed the preachers as well as we could, and all seemed to be satisfied."

Young Watters attended this Conference, the first that he witnessed; and small as it was, it was an imposing spectacle to him. He was "much edified by the conversation of his elder brethren," and preached before them, and a large congregation, in St. George's, with an awe which amounted to embarrassment. Gatch was also present, and though his name appeared not in the Minutes of the former session, he was now received into full membership, in consideration of his having regularly traveled during the preceding year.[1] A reinforcement of seven preachers was received on trial. Five candidates were admitted to membership. The statistical returns showed 10 circuits, 17 preachers, and 2,073 members. There had been an increase since the last Conference of 4 circuits,[2] 7 preachers, and 913 members. The members reported at the previous session had been nearly doubled. New York reported 222; Philadelphia, 204; New Jersey, 257; Maryland, 1,063; Virginia, 291. Maryland had gained 563; she had more than doubled her number of the preceding year; Virginia had gained 191, and had nearly trebled her previous returns. Maryland now included more than half the members of the entire denomination; Maryland and Virginia together included more than two thirds of them. Methodism was centralizing about the center of the colonies. New Jersey was divided into two circuits, Trenton and Greenwich; the

[1] Minutes, 1774. There is an apparent contradiction in Gatch's own statement. Life, p. 30.

[2] Of course new circuits were formed usually by the extension and division of old ones.

latter, and Brunswick, Va., and Frederick and Kent, Md., were the new ones recorded in the Minutes.

Of the particular proceedings of the Conference there remains scarcely any record whatever; nothing more than a few references to economical arrangements, such as that every itinerant in full membership in the Conference should own the horse provided for him by his circuit; that each preacher should be allowed six pounds, Pennsylvania currency, a quarter, (about sixty-four dollars a year,) besides traveling expenses; that Rankin, as "General Assistant," should be supported by the circuits where he might "spend his time;" that a collection should be made at Easter on each circuit to relieve the chapel debts and itinerants in want; and that "all preachers should change at the end of six months," that is to say, should labor but half the year on the same circuit. The itinerancy was under a stern regimen at that day. Hitherto, as we have seen, it transferred the preachers from New York to Philadelphia every four months; now it was more rigorous toward the laborers of the cities than before, for while the preachers on the country circuits exchanged semi-annually, those of Philadelphia and New York exchanged quarterly. The itinerancy was prized not only as affording variety of ministerial gifts to the Societies, but as a sort of military drill to the preachers. It kept them energetic by keeping them in motion. No great captain has approved of long encampments. The early Methodist itinerants were an evangelical cavalry; they were always in the saddle; if not in line of battle, yet skirmishing and pioneering; a mode of life which conduced not a little to that chivalric spirit and heroic character which distinguished them as a class. The system speedily killed off such as were weak in body, and drove off such as were

feeble in character; the remnant were the "giants of those days" morally, very often intellectually, and, to a notable extent, physically. Young men, prudently initiated into its hardships, acquired robust health, stentorian lungs, and buoyant spirits, "a good-humor," a bonhommie which facilitated not a little their access to the common people; but many whose souls were equal to their work sunk under it physically. Its early records are full, as we shall hereafter see, of examples of martyrdom.

On Friday, the 27th of May, the little band dispersed again to their circuits.

Asbury hastened to New York. He was bowed with disease, and though fervent in spirit, the record of his labors for the year is but meager. It is, however, pervaded with devout aspirations, and with an energy impatient of rest. We can trace him somewhat beyond the city, especially to New Rochelle, now one of his most favorite resorts; but he returns quickly, to throw himself upon his restless bed and to receive medical relief. "Christ is precious to my believing heart!" he exclaims; "blessed be God for this! It is infinitely more to me than the favor of all mankind and the possession of all the earth!" "Blessed be God! my soul is kept in peace and power and love;" yet he soon after adds, "Both my mind and body are weak," for his malady is grievously depressing. At every intermission of its attacks, however, he hastens to the pulpit, sometimes dragging his debilitated frame into it in such prostration that he can hardly stand while preaching. "Many of my good friends," he remarks on one of these occasions, "kindly visited me to-day, and in the afternoon I took another emetic. My heart is fixed on God as the best of objects, but pants for more vigor, and a permanent, solemn sense of God.

Rose the next morning at five, though very weak. Many people attended the public worship in the evening, though I was but just able to give them a few words of exhortation. Seeing the people so desirous to hear, now I am unable to say much to them, Satan tempts me to murmuring and discontent. May the Lord fill me with perfect resignation!" Again, later, "My body was very weak and sweated exceedingly. If I am the Lord's why am I thus? But in his word he hath told me, 'If I be without chastisement then am I a bastard and not a son.' O that this affliction may work in me the peaceable fruits of internal and universal righteousness! An attempt to speak a little in exhortation this evening greatly augmented my disorder."

To these trials were added the sadder affliction of discords in the New York Society, and of severe prejudice against him for his enforcement of discipline. Though habitually nerved with an energy of will which nothing could relax, he nevertheless sometimes turned aside to mourn in secret, with longings for the final rest. "Weak in both body and mind," he writes, "in this tabernacle I groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven. My soul longs to fly to God, that it may be ever with him. O happy day that shall call a poor exile home to his Father's house! But I must check the impetuous current of desire, for it is written, 'He that believeth shall not make haste.'" His disease advanced, till at last his "legs, hands, and feet were swollen;" but he meanwhile preached and met classes almost continually, in the adjacent country as well as in the city. Concord was restored in the John-street Society, and his own soul "strengthened with might and filled with peace."

Additional missionaries arrived from England about

the middle of November; they relieved Asbury, who had now remained at New York longer than his assigned time; and he hastened southward, still feeble in body, but ardent in soul. He spent three months in Philadelphia, but was disabled much of the time by his malady. In one of his attacks he says, "My friends, expecting my death, affectionately lamented over me." In the beginning of 1775 he writes, "I am once more able to write, and feel a solemn, grateful sense of God's goodness. My all of body, soul, and time, are his due; and should be devoted, without the least reserve, to his service and glory. O that he may give me grace sufficient! I am still getting better, but am not able to speak in public; though the word of the Lord is like fire within me, and I am almost weary of forbearing. My mind is filled with pure, evangelical peace. I had some conversation with Captain Webb, an Israelite indeed, and we both concluded that it was my duty to go to Baltimore. I feel willing to go, if it is even to die there."

In the latter part of February he was on his way to Baltimore, preaching as he went. Arriving there he wrote, "My heart was greatly refreshed at the sight of my spiritual children and kind friends, for whose welfare my soul had travailed both present and absent. The next day I had the pleasure of seeing our new house, and my old friends, with some new ones added to their number. Here are all my own with increase." On his first Sabbath in the city, "both in town and at the Point, large numbers," he says, "attended to hear the word. The power of God was present; and I had an inward witness that it was the will of God I should, at this time, be among these people."

And now, with gradually returning health, he becomes himself again he preaches, almost daily, at the Point or

in the town, and incessantly hastens to more or less distant parts of the circuit, proclaiming his message along his route, and again we read of "the divine energy going forth among the people;" of "much of the power of God" in the assemblies; of their bowing "under the weight of the word;" of "rich and poor" thronging them and "melting under the truth." Otterbein accompanies him, and they have "a blessed and refreshing season." Williams arrives from Virginia and cheers him with increasingly good news from that province, still, as in the previous year, the scene of the greatest religious interest in America. He reports "five or six hundred souls justified by faith, and five or six circuits formed; so that we have now fourteen circuits in America, and about twenty-two Preachers are required to supply them. Thus we see how Divine Providence makes way for the word of truth, and the Holy Spirit attends it. May it spread in power, and cover these lands! I dined with Mr. Otterbein, and spent the afternoon with him and Mr. Swoop, another minister of the same profession. They both appear to be sincerely religious, and intend to make proposals to the German synod this year to lay a plan for the reformation of the Dutch congregations."

German Methodism—the Church of the "United Brethren in Christ"—was thus germinating under the watchful eye of Asbury. He takes increasing delight in his labors, for their impression has become so visible that he can prophetically see the future Methodistic strength of Baltimore. "God," he writes, "is my portion, and my all-sufficient good. He fills me with pure spiritual life. My heart is melted into holy love, and altogether devoted to my Lord. Many came to hear the word of life in the evening, and my soul was supplied with strength. The Spirit of God attended our endeavors both in town

and at the Point. My heart was greatly enlarged, in town especially. There is a very apparent alteration in this place. There is not so much drunkenness and neglect of the ordinances as in former times, and the people are much more inclined to attend the places of public worship; so that, on the whole, I entertain a lively hope that the Lord will yet raise up for himself a large Society in Baltimore." The prediction has become fact.

The Revolutionary storm was lowering, but his faith fails not; he still prophesies good. On Monday, April 30th, he writes, "I preached three times, and the cup of my blessing was full. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits? But we have alarming military accounts from Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Surely the Lord will overrule, and make all these things subservient to the spiritual welfare of his Church." Rankin indulged in denunciatory premonitions of coming woes to the colonies. Asbury, bound as an Englishman to be respectful to his government, evidently saw, with the American statesmen, the great probable issues of the contest, both to the Church and the State. His sagacious mind anticipated the triumphs which awaited Methodism in the regenerated country. Though he apprehended immediate evil effects from the Revolution, he was reticent, yet obviously hopeful, and, as he subsequently proved, loyal at heart to the colonial cause.

Asbury's usefulness in the Baltimore Circuit at this time had permanently important results. He gathered into the young Societies not a few of those influential families whose opulence and social position gave material strength to Methodism through much of its early history in that city, while their exemplary devotion helped to maintain its primitive purity and power. Henry Dorsey Gough and his family were distinguished examples.

Gough possessed a fortune in lands and money amounting to more than three hundred thousand dollars. He had married a daughter of Governor Ridgeley. His country residence—Perry Hall, about twelve miles from the city—was "one of the most spacious and elegant in America at that time."[3] But he was an unhappy man in the midst of his luxury. His wife had been deeply impressed by the Methodist preaching, but he forbade her to hear them again. While reveling with wine and gay companions, one evening, it was proposed that they should divert themselves by going together to a Methodist assembly. Asbury was the preacher, and no godless diversion could be found in his presence. "What nonsense," exclaimed one of the convivialists, as they returned, "what nonsense have we heard to-night!" "No;" replied Gough, startling them with sudden surprise, "No; what we have heard is the truth, the truth as it is in Jesus." "I will never hinder you again from hearing the Methodists," he said, as he entered his house and met his wife. The impression of the sermon was so profound that he could no longer enjoy his accustomed pleasures. He became deeply serious and, at last, melancholy, "and was near destroying himself" under the awakened sense of his misspent life; but God mercifully preserved him. Riding to one of his plantations, he heard the voice of prayer and praise in a cabin, and, listening, discovered that a negro from a neighboring estate was leading the devotions of his own slaves, and offering fervent thanksgivings for the blessings of their depressed lot. His heart was touched, and with emotion he exclaimed, "Alas, O Lord! I have my thousands and tens of thousands, and yet, ungrateful wretch that I am, I never thanked thee, as this poor slave does, who has scarcely

[3] Lednum, p. 153.

clothes to put on or food to satisfy his hunger." The luxurious master was taught a lesson, on the nature of true contentment and happiness, which he could never forget. His work-worn servants in their lowly cabins knew a blessedness which he had never found in his sumptuous mansion. He returned home, pondering the mystery, with a distressed and contrite heart. He retired from his table, which was surrounded by a large company of his friends, and threw himself upon his knees in a chamber. While there, imploring the mercy of God, he received conscious pardon and peace. In a transport of joy he went to his company, exclaiming, "I have found the Methodists' blessing, I have found the Methodists' God!" Both he and his wife now became members of the Methodist Society, and Perry Hall was henceforth an asylum for the itinerants and a "preaching place." Rankin visited it the next year, and says, "I spent a most agreeable evening with them. A numerous family of servants were called in for exhortation and prayer, so that, with them and the rest of the house, we had a little congregation."

The wealthy convert erected a chapel contiguous to Perry Hall; the first American Methodist church that had a bell, and it rang every morning and evening, summoning his numerous household and slaves to family worship. They made a congregation; for the establishment comprised a hundred persons. The Circuit Preachers supplied it twice a month, and Local Preachers every Sunday. After some years of steadfast piety, this liberal man yielded to the strong temptations of his social position, and fell away from his humbler brethren. But his excellent wife maintained her integrity, and her fidelity was rewarded by his restoration. Under the labors of Asbury, his "spiritual father," he was reclaimed in 1800,

and applied for readmission to the Church in the Light-street Chapel, Baltimore. When the pastor put the question of his reception to vote the whole assembly rose, and with tears and prayers welcomed him again. His zeal was renewed, his devotion steadfast, and he built another chapel for the Methodists in a poor neighborhood. His charities were large; and he was ever ready to minister, with both his means and his Christian sympathies, to the afflicted within or without the pale of his Church. After his reclamation he exclaimed, "O if my wife had ever given way to the world I should have been lost; but her uniformly good life inspired me with the hope that I should one day be restored to the favor of God." He preached at times, and, during the agitations of the Revolution, was brought before the magistrates for his public labors. He died in 1808, while the General Conference of his Church was in session in Baltimore. Asbury, who had twice led him to the cross, was present to comfort him in his final trial, and says, "In his last hours, which were painfully afflictive, he was much given up to God. When the corpse was removed, to be taken into the country for interment, many of the members of the General Conference walked in procession after it to the end of the town." The Bishop describes him as "a man much respected and beloved; as a husband, a father, and a master, well worthy of imitation; his charities were as numerous as proper objects to a Christian were likely to make them; and the souls and bodies of the poor were administered to in the manner of a Christian who remembered the precepts and followed the example of his Divine Master."

"Perry Hall," says the Methodist chronicler, "was the resort of much company, among whom the skeptic and the Romanist were sometimes found. Members of

the Baltimore bar, the *élite* of Maryland, were there. But it mattered not who were there; when the bell rang for family devotion they were seen in the chapel, and if there was no male person present, who could lead the devotions, Mrs. Gough read a chapter in the Bible, gave out a hymn, which was often raised and sung by the colored servants, after which she would engage in prayer. Take her altogether, few such have been found on earth."[4] Asbury called her a "true daughter" to himself, and Coke, "a precious woman, of fine sense." "Her only sister became a Methodist about the same time that she did; they continued faithful to a good old age, when they were called to take a higher seat. Most of her relations followed her example of piety. Many of them were Methodists cast in the old die. Methodism still continues in this distinguished family." Its only daughter became, under her parental training, a devoted Methodist. Her marriage into the Carroll family, memorable in our revolutionary history, did not impair, but extended her religious influence.

This devout and liberal family has long been historical in our Church annals. The early books of Methodism make frequent reference to it, and its services to the denomination. Asbury's Journals have rendered its name familiar. A veteran itinerant, who lingered till he became the oldest living Methodist preacher, has drawn the picture of the Christian hospitalities of Perry Hall, remarking, "We were received in their usual warm and affectionate way, and I was for the first time introduced to that dear household. I soon found that religion in its native simplicity dwelt in some great houses, and that some of the rich had been cast in the Gospel mould, and came out in the image and likeness of their Lord. Perry Hall was the largest dwelling-house I had ever seen, and

[4] Lednum, chap. 23.

all its arrangements, within and without, were tasteful and elegant, yet simplicity and utility seemed to be stamped upon the whole. The garden, orchards, and everything else, were delightful indeed, and looked to me like an earthly paradise. But, what pleased me better than anything else, I found a neat chapel attached to the house, with a small cupola and bell, that could be heard all over the farm. In this chapel morning and evening prayers were offered to God. The bell rang about half an hour before prayer, when the manager and servants from the farm-house, and servants' quarters, and garden, together with the inhabitants of the great mansion, repaired to the chapel. So large and well-regulated a family I never saw before. All seemed to know their place, and duty, and did it. For some reasons we had prayers in the parlor that night, and it was a solemn time. When we rose from our knees all took their seats and were silent. I was led to talk a little of the excellence of religion, and the beauty of holiness. All were attentive, and some wept; I believe Mr. Gough was in tears. After I was done he came to me, and took my hand in both his, and expressed himself pleased; and from that hour I felt myself at home at Perry Hall."[5] We shall have occasion often to return to Perry Hall, and shall at last meet there Asbury and Coke, Whatcoat and Vesey, from England, and Black from Nova Scotia, constructing under its hospitable roof the organization of the M. E. Church prior to the "Christmas Conference." Asbury continued his successful labors on the Baltimore Circuit till May, 1775, when he departed for the Conference at Philadelphia.

Rankin has left but brief notices of his labors during this ecclesiastical year. He remained apparently about six months in Philadelphia, making expeditions to New

[5] Recollections of an Old Itinerant. By Rev. Henry Smith. Letter 22.

Jersey and other adjacent regions. In the autumn of 1774, he went into Maryland to hold a Quarterly Conference. Shadford, and several of his fellow-laborers in the state, were present, and Williams had come two hundred miles from Virginia to encourage them with the good news with which he had refreshed Asbury. On the first of November they held their first Quarterly Meeting for the season. "We had our general love-feast," says Rankin, "in the forenoon, and finished the business of the Circuit after dinner. In the evening we had our watch-night. This was a day to be remembered, and I hope it will be by some to all eternity. The heavens were opened, and the skies poured down righteousness. The Lord spoke to many hearts with a mighty voice, and the shout of the King of Glory was heard in our camp. Blessed be the name of our God forever and for evermore!"

A week later he writes, "We rode to Henry Watters's, near Deer Creek, where we intended holding our Quarterly Meeting for Baltimore and Kent circuit, on the Eastern Shore. After an early breakfast we spent about two hours in the affairs of the circuits. At ten our general love-feast began. There was such a number of whites and blacks as never had attended on such an occasion before. After we had sung and prayed the cloud burst from my mind, and the power of the Lord descended in such an extraordinary manner as I had never seen since my landing at Philadelphia. All the preachers were so overcome with the Divine presence that they could scarce address the people, but only in broken accents say, 'This is none other than the house of God, and the gate of heaven!' When any of the people stood up to declare the loving-kindness of God, they were so overwhelmed with the Divine presence that they were obliged to sit

down and let silence speak his praise. Near the close of our meeting I stood up and called upon the people to look toward that part of the chapel where all the blacks were. I then said 'See the number of the Africans who have stretched out their hands unto God!' While I was addressing the people thus, it seemed as if the very house shook with the mighty power and glory of Sinai's God. Many of the people were so overcome that they were ready to faint and die under his Almighty hand. For about three hours the gale of the Spirit thus continued to breathe upon the dry bones; and they did live the life of glorious love! As for myself, I scarce knew whether I was in the body or not; and so it was with all my brethren. We did not know how to break up the meeting or part asunder. Surely the fruits of this season will remain to all eternity."

Shadford was appointed by the Conference of 1774 to Baltimore Circuit, with three other preachers. He was a man of fervid eloquence, of great tenderness of feeling, and readiness for any opportunity of usefulness. The people sought, especially in affliction, his sympathetic counsels. A few weeks after his arrival in Baltimore "a young man," he says, "came to me with two horses, and entreated me to go to his father's house, about four miles from the city, to visit his poor distressed brother, who was chained in bed, and whose case they did not understand, supposing him to be mad, or possessed with a devil. When I entered the room I found the young man in the depth of despair. I told him Christ died for sinners; that he came to seek and to save the lost; yea, that he received the chief of sinners, and added, 'There is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ.' The young man laid hold of those words, 'The name of

Jesus Christ;' and said he would call upon Jesus Christ as long as he lived, and found some little hope within him, but knew no more how he must be saved than an Indian. I sung a verse or two of a hymn, and then his father, mother, and brethren joined me in prayer. The power of God was among us of a truth; we had melted hearts and weeping eyes, and indeed there was a shower of tears among us. I know not when I have felt more of the Divine presence, or power to wrestle with God in prayer, than at this time. After we rose from our knees, I gave an exhortation, and continued to go to preach in their house every week or fortnight for some time. They loosed the young man that was bound; and the Lord shortly after loosed him from the chain of his sins, and set him at perfect liberty. He soon began to warn his neighbors, and to exhort sinners to flee from the wrath which is to come; and before I left the country, he began to travel a circuit, and was remarkably successful. I followed him in Kent, Delaware; and verily believe he was instrumental in awakening a hundred sinners that year."

The faithful itinerant thus provided a new preaching place and a preacher. This young man was Joseph Cromwell, whose name was enrolled, on the Conference list of itinerants, in 1777.

Shadford's colleagues, on the Baltimore Circuit, were Robert Lindsey, Edward Dromgoole, and Richard Webster. Lindsey, an Irishman, was admitted on trial at the Conference of 1774. He continued to itinerate in this country about three years, after which he returned to Europe, and labored in the Wesleyan ministry till 1788. Dromgoole was also an Irishman. He had been a Papist, but was led, in 1770, by Methodist influence in his native country, to renounce Popery, by reading, publicly in a

church, his recantation. In the same year he arrived in Baltimore with a letter of introduction to his countryman, Robert Strawbridge. He heard Strawbridge preach, and induced him to visit Fredericktown. Methodism was thus introduced into that community. Dromgoole still deemed himself an unregenerate man; but after a period of deep mental distress, he received the peace of God while upon his knees on a Sunday evening. He began to preach in 1773; the next year he was employed, till the Conference, on the Frederick Circuit. The Conference sent him, as a co-laborer with Shadford, to Baltimore Circuit. He labored in various places, but chiefly in Virginia and North Carolina, till 1786,[6] when he located on the Brunswick Circuit, where he continued to be useful. Richard Webster, Shadford's other colleague, was one of the earliest Methodist converts of Harford County, Maryland, where he joined the Church under Strawbridge, in 1768; in 1770 his house was a "preaching place" of the denomination; about the same time he became a public laborer in the cause; in 1772 Asbury sent him out to travel with John King, on the Eastern Shore of the state. He seems to have been an unpretentious "Helper;" for though his name appears in the appointments for 1774 and 1775, he was never received on trial, but traveled under direction of the "preacher in charge." He is not recorded in the classified catalogue of regular itinerants, given by the earliest historian of Methodism.[7]

Led on by the ardent Shadford, these new laborers (all of them for the first time on the list of appointments) were, with their coadjutors on the two other Maryland Circuits, greatly successful. The number of Methodists

[6] Lednum, p. 133. Lee locates him earlier, p. 318. A large majority of the itinerants of the last century located when they married. The Church was yet too poor to support ministerial families.

[7] Lee's History, p. 317.

in the state was increased, by more than one third, before the ensuing session of the Conference.

Among their fellow-laborers in the state was Philip Gatch, who traveled the Frederick Circuit some months, and Kent Circuit the remainder of the year. Gatch writes: "These were trying times to Methodist preachers. Some endured as seeing Him who is invisible; others left the field in the day of conflict. My appointment by the Conference was for six months to Frederick Circuit with William Duke, who was quite a youth. We found the circuit to be very laborious; some of the rides were quite long; and there were only one hundred and seventy-five members in the Society. Fredericktown and Georgetown were both in the circuit; but there were only a few members in each. Mr. Strawbridge and Mr. Owen lived in the bounds of this charge. We found among the few in Society some steady, firm members, and in some places the prospect was encouraging. I had gone but a few rounds when I received a letter from Mr. Shadford directing me to gather up my clothes and books and meet him at the quarterly conference to be held in Baltimore. It was a time of the outpouring of the Spirit; my own soul was greatly refreshed. Mr. Shadford at the interview made a remark which was afterward of great service to me. Said he, 'When addressing the people always treat on those subjects that will affect your own heart, and the feelings of the hearers will be sure to be affected.' I was ordered to Kent Circuit to take the place of Whitworth." Whitworth, as we have seen, had apostatized while on this circuit, and it had been without a preacher since the last Conference. "This," adds Gatch, "under the circumstances, was a great trial to me, for he had given the enemies of Methodism great ground for reproach. But, in the name of the Lord, I

proceeded. My first Sabbath appointment was at the very place where he had wounded the cause of God. I felt both weak and strong. There was assembled a very large congregation. Many behaved quite disorderly, evincing an intention of treating the service with contempt. I had not the fortitude to reprove them, knowing the cause of their conduct. After I had closed my sermon, I made an appointment to preach at the same place in two weeks, and remarked that I was sorry they had been so long without preaching, and that I hoped they would not censure the Conference, for they had been imposed upon by a man unworthy as he had proved himself to be of their confidence; that they disapproved of the man, and of all the conduct of which he had been guilty. But the Lord reigneth, and he often saith, 'Be still and know that I am God.' In this instance he manifested his power in an extraordinary manner in overruling the evil which we feared. The work of the Lord was greatly revived on this small circuit. Numbers were converted at the different appointments; and in the neighborhood where the wound was inflicted the work of God was the most powerful. The Most High can work as he pleases. His way is often in the whirlwind." He had several severe rencounters with persecutors on this circuit. At one of his appointments a man entered the door while he was preaching, whose menacing aspect excited his suspicion. He gradually approached the preacher, and at the last prayer seized the chair at which the latter was kneeling, evidently intending to use it as a weapon with which to attack him; but Gatch took hold of it and prevented the blow. The contest now became violent, and the assailant "roared like a lion," while the evangelist "was upon his knees reproving him in the language of St. Paul." But the ruffian was soon seized by persons in the congre-

gation, and thrown with such energy out of the house that his coat was torn entirely down his back. While in the yard he "roared like a demon;" but Gatch escaped without injury. He rejoiced over one of his best trophies won in this contested place: Philip Cox, afterward a useful traveling preacher, was converted there.

A noted clerical persecutor by the name of Kain resided in a neighborhood of this circuit, a man who had repeatedly opposed the itinerants in public, endeavoring to drive them from the field; and many are the traditions still current on the Eastern Shore about his boisterous hostility to Whitworth, Watters, and others. When Gatch was to preach within his parish, he circulated his intention to meet and refute the itinerant. "I heard of this," says the latter, "the day before the appointment was to take place, and I understood that he was a mighty man of war. I knew that I was weak, and that unless I was strengthened from on high I should fail. I went to God in prayer, and he brought to my mind the case of David with the lion, the bear, and Goliath. I then gathered strength, and now no longer dreaded the encounter. The minister met me in the yard in clerical costume, and asked me if I was the person that was to preach there that day. I replied, 'I expect to do so.' He then asked me by what authority. I answered, 'By the authority which God gave me.' After a few words had passed between us, he again asked by what authority I had come to preach in St. Luke's parish. I remarked that I was just then going to preach, and he might judge for himself, for the Scripture saith, 'He that is spiritual judgeth all things.' I stood upon a platform erected for the occasion in an orchard. Parson Kain took his station on my right. I took for my text Ezekiel xviii, 27: 'Again, when the wicked man turneth away

from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive.' I concluded that this sentence, which is contained in the Church prayer book, would not be taking him from home. I knew a great deal of the prayer book by heart, and took it with me through my sermon. Mr. Kain's countenance evinced an excited state of mind. When I had closed he took the stand, and on my handing him my Bible, he attempted to read the interview with Nicodemus, but he was so confused that he could not distinctly read it. From that passage he attempted to disprove the new birth, substituting in its stead water baptism. He exclaimed against extemporaneous prayer, urging the necessity of a written form. When he had closed I again took the stand, read the same passage, and remarked that we could feel the effects of the wind upon our bodies, and see it on the trees, but the wind we could not see; and I referred to my own experience, that having been baptized in infancy, I was not sensible of the regenerating influence of the Spirit till the time of my conversion, and then it was sensibly felt. I met his objection to extemporary prayer by a few Scripture cases, such as when Peter was sinking he did not go ashore to get a prayer book, but cried out, 'Save, Lord, or I perish.' I then quit the stand to meet an appointment that afternoon, and the congregation followed, with the parson in the rear. When leaving, a man came to me and asked me to preach at his house, which was twenty miles from the orchard. These things are hid from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes. One Sabbath, while I was preaching, there came up an awful storm. Some of the people ran out for fear the house would be blown over. I exhorted them to continue in the house and look to God for safety. I hardly ever saw

such a house of prayer. Two were converted during the storm, and our lives were spared. Salvation is of the Lord, and the pure in heart shall see him in his wonderful ways."

Thus did the young evangelist find singular encouragements amid the peculiar adversities of his circuit. By his persevering labors, his modest courage, his meekness of wisdom, he not only redeemed it from the dishonor which his predecessor had left upon it, but subdued the violence of open opposers, and left it in unusual prosperity, united, increased in members, and with a great door opened for the spread of the Gospel. It reported at the next Conference a gain of more than a hundred members, and such was the demand for preaching that two itinerants had to be sent to it.

In accordance with the rule of the Conference, Gatch was transferred, before the close of the year, back to Frederick, "where," he says, "we had to labor hard, as formerly. Some Societies were lively and on the increase, but others were barren. One Saturday evening, as I was going to my Sabbath appointment, I had to pass by a tavern. As I approached I heard a noise and concluded mischief was contemplated. It was dark, and I bore as far from the house as I could in the lane that inclosed the road; but they either heard or saw me, and I was pursued by two men on horseback, who seized my horse by the bridle, and turning me about, led me back to the house, heaping upon me severe threats, and laying on my shoulders a heavy cudgel that was carried by one of them. After they got me back to the tavern they ordered me to call for something to drink; but on my refusal the tavern-keeper whispered to me that if I would it should cost me nothing; but I refused to do so, regardless of the consequences. While the subject as to what

disposition was to be made of me was under consultation, two of them disagreed, and by this quarrel the attention of the company was drawn from me, so that I rode on my way, leaving them to settle the matter as best they could. The Lord hath made all things for himself, the wicked for the day of evil; the wicked brought me into difficulty, and by the wicked a way was made for my escape."

He reports other "persecutions" as "prevailing" on this circuit. Storms were gathering around the whole horizon of the country. Political agitation and war were about to relax all its moral ties, and the Methodist itinerants were to suffer severely in the general tumult; to be mobbed, tarred and feathered, imprisoned, driven into exile or concealment; but they were not men who could be defeated by such hostilities, and in their worst trials they showed their greatest strength and won their greatest triumphs. "We had," says Gatch on Frederick Circuit, "this consolation, that though in some places indifference and persecution prevailed, yet in others the cause was prosperous, and many joined the Church." The increase on this circuit, for the year, was over one hundred and sixty.

Before the Conference he was transferred again, as far as New Jersey, for there also misfortune called for his peculiar talents. Whitworth, after disgracing the denomination on the Eastern Shore, had gone thither and perverted Ebert, one of the circuit preachers, to heretical opinions; Ebert was expelled, the circuit was left some time without a preacher, and Gatch now went to supply it till the Conference. Here likewise his zeal and wisdom prevailed; the evil effects of Ebert's defection were counteracted, and an increase of fifty members was reported from the circuit to the next Conference. A friend of

Gatch justly remarks that "the Church in its infancy had peculiar trials to endure. The reproach of Christ had to be borne; persecution had to be encountered at every step; few as were its members there were traitors in it. And yet these things were overcome by the faithfulness of a few who were in the field. Since the days of the apostles there had scarcely been a time when so much prudence, firmness, enduring labor, and holiness were required as in the propagation of Methodism in America. To his deep piety and entire devotion the success of Mr. Gatch may be attributed. His prudence was wonderful on being sent to Kent Circuit. How soon did he retrieve the Church, and eradicate the disgrace which had been thrown upon it by his predecessor. This beginning of his labors was an earnest of what results might be anticipated from his future life."[8] "Gatch," says one of the best judges, who knew him well, "showed traits of character eminently calculated to meet the exigencies of the time, and to inculcate and carry out the doctrines he preached. He had great firmness and perseverance, and was ready to suffer and die for the truth. While he acted with great prudence, he shrunk from no responsibility which was necessary to be met in his course of duty."[9]

Meanwhile the rough energy but saintly devotion and apostolic zeal of Abbott were awaking large portions of New Jersey. Though he was the Class Leader and practically the Pastor of the Society in his own neighborhood, he was preaching at large on Sundays and at nights. He went to Deerfield, where a mob assembled and threatened to tar and feather any itinerant who should appear there. He was met by a friend on the road and admonished to turn back. "At first," he says, "I thought I would

[8] Memoir, p. 39. [9] Justice M'Lean.

return; consulting with flesh and blood, I concluded that it would be a disagreeable thing to have my clothes spoiled, and my hair all matted together with tar." But he recalled the sufferings of his Lord, and immediately "resolved to go and preach if he had to die for it." He found a large congregation filling the house and crowding the neighboring premises. "I went," he continues, "in among them, and gave out a hymn, but no one sung; I then sung four lines myself, while every joint in my body trembled. I said, Let us pray, and before prayer was over the power of God fell on me in such a manner that it instantly removed from me the fear of man, and some cried out. I arose, took my text and preached with great liberty; before the meeting was over I saw many tears drop from their eyes, and the head of the mob said that 'he had never heard such preaching since Robert Williams went away;' so I came off clear. Glory be to God, who stood by me in this trying hour!" He meets soon after with a Methodist preacher who talks with him about Wesley's views of sanctification, and he resolves to seek that higher grace. "I was now," he says, "engaged for the blessing more than ever. Soon after, Daniel Ruff came upon the circuit, and my house being a preaching place, he came and preached, and in the morning, in family prayer, he prayed that God would sanctify us soul and body. I repeated these words after him, 'Come, Lord, and sanctify me, soul and body!' That moment the Spirit of God came upon me in such a manner that I fell flat to the floor. I had not power to lift hand or foot, nor yet to speak one word; I believe I lay half an hour, and felt the power of God running through every part of my soul and body, like fire consuming the inward corruptions of fallen, depraved nature. When I arose and walked out of the door, and stood pondering

these things in my heart, it appeared to me that the whole creation was praising God; it also appeared as if I had got new eyes, for everything appeared new, and I felt a love for all the creatures that God had made, and an uninterrupted peace filled my breast. In three days God gave me a full assurance that he had sanctified me, soul and body. 'If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him.' John xiv, 23, which I found day by day manifested to my soul, by the witness of his Spirit. Glory to God for what he then did and since has done for poor me!"

More than ever did his soul now flame with zeal for the salvation of the people. He soon found his way into Salem, where his bones now rest, and where he is still venerated as the tutelary saint of its Methodist community. "A large congregation," he writes, "assembled, to whom I preached, and God attended the word with power; some cried out and many were in tears. After the sermon I made another appointment for that day two weeks. There being an elder of the Presbyterian Church present, he asked me if I would come and preach at his house; I told him that I would, on that day two weeks, at three o'clock. Another said it was the truth I had spoken, but in a very rough manner. At the time appointed I attended, and found many people at both places. At the first, I felt much freedom in speaking, and after sermon found that both the man and his wife were awakened. At the second, great power attended the word; several cried aloud, and one fell to the floor. After meeting, I asked the man of the house if he knew what he had done. He replied, 'What have I done?' 'You have opened your door to the Methodists, and if a work of religion break out your people will turn

you out of their synagogue.' He replied that he 'would die for the truth.' I appointed to preach again at both places that day two weeks. Next day, on my return home, I called at a Baptist's house, whose daughter was very ill; after some conversation, I went to prayer, and the Lord set her soul at liberty, and she praised God before us all. Here I fell in company with one of Whitefield's converts, who had known the Lord forty years; we had great comfort in conversing together upon the things of God; he was an Israelite indeed. About two years after he came to see me, and told me that he had come to die at my house; accordingly he was taken sick, and died there happy in God."

The good seed scattered by Whitefield was now seen, by the Methodist itinerants, springing up almost everywhere along the Atlantic coast.

Abbott, after his own hard struggles with the "great adversary," felt a sort of bold defiance of him, and was prepared always to invade his strongest holds. He now made a Sabbath expedition to a place which, for its notorious depravity, was called "Hell Neck." "One sinner there," he writes, "said he had heard Abbott swear, and had seen him fight, and now would go and hear him preach. The word reached his heart, and he soon after became a convert to the Lord. After meeting he invited me home with him, and several others invited me to preach at their houses, so that I got preaching places all through the neighborhood and a considerable revival of religion took place, although it had been so noted for wickedness. Among others, a young lad, about fifteen years old, was awakened, and in a few weeks found peace; his father, being a great enemy to religion, opposed him violently, and resolved to prevent his being a Methodist, and even whipped him for praying. This soon threw him into

great distress, and on the very borders of despair. I heard of it and went to see him. He told me his temptations." Abbott perceived his morbid anxiety, and comforted him. "The son," he adds, "then cried out, 'The Lord is here! the Lord is here!' The father said to me, 'Benjamin, are you not a freemason?' I told him 'no, I knew nothing of freemasonry, but I knew that this was the operation of the Spirit of God.' The father then wept. I went to prayer, and the family were all in tears; after this the son went on joyfully. After I left this house I went to another of the neighbors, and after some conversation with them I went to prayer; the man kneeled, but the woman continued knitting all the time of the prayer. When I arose I took her by the hand and said, 'Do you pray?' and looking steadfastly at her, added, 'God pity you.' This pierced her heart, so that she never rested until her soul was converted to the Lord. The whole neighborhood seemed alarmed."

Such quaintly told incidents abound throughout the narrative of this good man's life. He thus "went about doing good," and in his devout simplicity and earnestness rescued more souls than all the more formal pastors for miles around him. The simple but degenerate people understood his artless words. They intuitively recognized the genuineness of his religious character, the purity of his motives, and as he concerned himself exclusively with the essential truths of religion, they gladly clung to him with repentant tears, as a safe guide to their awakened souls. The prejudices of their religious education could not withstand his simple and affectionate appeals. People of all denominations gathered in his congregations, and often an individual conversion became the germ of a flourishing society. "A Quaker," he says, "who one day came to hear me, asked me home with him;

when I entered his house I said, 'God has brought salvation to this house.' At prayer, in the evening, his daughter was struck under conviction, and soon after the old man, his wife, three sons and two daughters, were all brought to experience religion, so that we formed a considerable society."

In Mannington, his nearest appointment, great throngs attended; the man and his wife, at whose house the services were held, were both converted, "and many others were stirred up to inquire the way to heaven." He reached Woodstown, where he had a crowded house. He was mobbed there, and bayonets were presented at his breast; "the people fled," he says, "every way; a man presented his gun and bayonet as though he would run me through; it passed close by my ear twice. If ever I preached the terrors of the law, I did it while he was threatening me in this manner, for I felt no fear of death, and soon found he could not withstand the force of truth; he gave way and retreated to the door. They endeavored to send him back again, but in vain, for he refused to return."

He moved his family to a new home, near Salem; "here," he continues, "I had many doors opened for me to preach, and a powerful work of religion took place, attended with several remarkable conversions." Many of these "remarkable" occurrences were evidently cases of mental as well as of moral disease. But the mental disturbance which not unusually attends the awakening of the conscience, is perhaps an unavoidable effect of the discovery, by the soul, of its long and perilous neglect of its highest interest and duty. Abbott was not able scientifically to appreciate such examples, but his good common sense and tender evangelical spirit enabled him to counsel them with singular pertinency; and seldom or never did he fail to recover such sufferers, more effect-

ually and promptly than could any scientific skill. It is astonishing how frequent were these cases among people of almost every variety of religious education, and how aptly and successfully he treated them. "A Quaker woman," he says, "went from preaching under strong conviction, and such anguish of mind that she paid no attention to her family, nor even to her sucking child. Early in the morning I was sent for: when I arrived she was sitting with both hands clenched fast in the hair of her head, crying out, 'Lord, have mercy on me! Save, Lord, or I perish!' I told her to pray in faith, to look to Jesus, and lay hold of the promises, and God would have mercy on her; but she replied, 'I cannot pray.' I said, 'You do pray very well; go on.' I then kneeled down and prayed; three pious women who were present did so likewise. One of them said she could not pray in English. I told her to pray in Dutch, for God understood that as well as English. The distressed woman appeared to be worse, like one going distracted. I then sang. When the last words were sung I felt such faith, that I told them the Lord would deliver her; and said, let us pray. I kneeled down; in a few minutes she clapped her hands together and cried, 'My Lord, my God, and my Father!' Her soul was immediately set at liberty, and she sprang up, rejoicing, and giving glory to God. Her husband burst into a flood of tears. I exhorted him to look to God, and he would find mercy. In about six weeks after he was safely converted." A woman who was present became doubtful of her own conversion, because she had never had any of these remarkable experiences. Abbott's good sense was again shown. "I told her," he says, "that was no proof, for I was not wrought on in that manner myself, yet I knew that I was converted. God works upon his people as he in his

wisdom sees best; no one's distress can be a standard for another; so that, if our sins or guilt are removed, and the power of religion fixed in the soul, it is enough. None should doubt it because he has not been brought in as he sees others. The Lord blessed her with such light and comfort that every fear and doubt was removed." Another instance was a headstrong Papist, who had sturdily persecuted his wife for her devotion to religion among the Methodists. On a Sunday morning he left her, in a violent passion, because she would not spend the day with him in visits, rather than in religious services. "But," says Abbott, "before he had gone far he concluded he would return, and with malice and murder in his heart, determined that she should go with him, or he would kill her; when they met she spoke to him with such tenderness that his rage calmed away. He concluded he would go with her to meeting; they both came, and, under preaching, the word struck him with such power that he cried aloud, and told before all the congregation what had passed in the morning, and wanted to know what he should do to be saved. I explained to him the way and plan of salvation; and in a short time he found peace, and became a steady, religious man." A schoolmaster, who "was a learned, sensible man, but a very drunken and wicked one, was awakened, and so far reformed that he left off drinking to excess, and other vices, for some time, but again gave way to temptation and was overcome by strong drink. After he become sober, his mind was tormented with great horror; he went to a neighbor's house to tarry all night, but, after the family were all in bed, he could not sleep under his tormenting reflections"—which at last resulted in an obvious case of *mania à potu*. Abbott was no judge of such a

phenomenon, but he met it skillfully. The wretched man thought he saw devils menacing him. The whole family was alarmed and rose, but did not know what to do. "They sent over for me," says Abbott; "I went, and found him in a shocking condition. I told him it was only the strength of imagination; that there were no devils there to take him away; but he still declared they were in the room. I instantly went to prayer; all present fell upon their knees, much affected, and continued in supplication during the whole night. Soon after this scene, all the grown part of the family were brought into the liberty and knowledge of the truth, as it is in Jesus."

No evangelist of that day was more successful than Benjamin Abbott, and there can be no more truly historical *rationale* of his extraordinary usefulness than is afforded by such examples. He was mighty as a preacher, and he preached with the expectation of such immediate and individual results. The distinct, demonstrative reformation and salvation of individual souls were the only satisfactory proofs to him of the success of his ministry; and he sought for such proofs in every place he visited, after every sermon he delivered. He pursued them to their utmost results, and they became, as has been shown, the germs of many of the Societies which he formed. He thus combined, with his overwhelming preaching, a species of most important pastoral labor, without which his public exercises would have lost half their value. And it is particularly noteworthy that this unlettered man was endowed, as we have seen, chiefly by the effect of religion on his own mind, with so much clear and genial good sense as to be particularly apt in ministering to minds diseased, so common, so inevitable, perhaps it should be said, in times of religious excite-

ment; not so much the effect of such excitement as of the previous guilty life, then often suddenly and for the first time revealed, in its true character, to the awakened moral sense. Though very credulous himself, and in his early religious history somewhat fanatical, inwardly combating with demons and seeing wondrous visions of the night, yet, like Bunyan, with whose early religious struggles his own were so remarkably coincident, he became prudent, and "mighty in the Scriptures," and thus acquired uncommon skill in the ministration of comfort to morbid consciences, in directing them from delusive fears to the consolatory promises and the simple and gracious conditions of acceptance with God. Withal he attained a truly scriptural catholicity. "For my part," he writes, "I do not believe that religion consists in either form or mode. Neither do I believe a record of our names, on any church-book under heaven, will stand the test in the awful hour of accounts, unless they are recorded in the Lamb's book of life. I love real heart religion, let me find it where I may."

Abbott's fame was now general, and "the work," he says, "became general; we used to hold prayer-meetings two or three times a week, in the evening; sometimes we would begin preaching at eleven o'clock, and not part till night; many long summer days we thus spent. Sometimes we used to assemble in the woods and under the trees, there not being room in the house for the people that attended. Often, some of them would be struck to the ground in bitter lamentations. The Lord wrought great wonders among us. It was truly a fulfillment of that Scripture which says, 'I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it unto you.' Acts xiii, 41. The alarm spread far and near; friends sent for me to come

to New Mills, Pemberton, about sixty miles distant. The first time I preached God worked powerfully; we had a weeping time, and one fell to the floor; this alarmed the people, for they had never seen the like before; when meeting was over, we took him to a friend's house, and prayer was made for him till he rejoiced in the love of God. Next day I preached again, and the Lord poured out his Spirit among us, so that there was weeping in abundance, and one fell to the floor; many prayers being made for him, he found peace before he arose. He is a living witness to this day. I saw him not long since, and we had a precious time together. Next day I traveled some miles, and preached in a Presbyterian meeting-house. I had a large congregation, and spoke from these words, 'Ye must be born again.' God attended the word with power; some wept, some groaned, and others cried aloud. I believe there were about twenty Indians present, and when I came out of the pulpit they got all round me, asking what they should do to be saved, and tears ran in abundance; many of the white people also wept. This was a day of God's power; from the accounts afterward given me, it appeared that twelve were converted and many awakened. One who was a deacon in the Church found the Lord and joined our Society; I have spent many precious moments with him since that day."

These physical effects of religious excitement—the excesses of a commendable spiritual earnestness—were not peculiar to Methodist preaching. Outcries, convulsions, syncopes, had been common in the province before the first visit of Whitefield, under the ministrations of Rowland, whose hearers "fainted away," and were often carried out of the churches as dead men. Similar effects attended Whitefield's preaching[10] there.

[10] History of the Religious Movement, etc., i, 142.

They had been common under the labors of Edwards, in New England. The best Methodist authorities have not considered them necessary accompaniments of a genuine religious awakening, but, while admitting them to be hardly avoidable in times of profound religious excitement, they regret them as human infirmities and recommend all possible caution against them.[11]

Thus the labors of this energetic man went on from village to village, town to town, county to county, till the whole state felt, more or less, his influence, and acknowledged that he was a strange but indisputable power among the people, turning scores and hundreds "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." We shall frequently meet him hereafter, and find him growing mightier unto the end.

William Watters was also abroad, in New Jersey, during most of this ecclesiastical year. "The latter part of the winter," he says, "and through the spring, many in the upper end of the circuit were greatly wrought on, and our meetings were lively and powerful. The cries of the people, for mercy, were frequently loud and earnest. Several who had long rested in a form of godliness were brought under pressing concern and found the Lord, and many of the most serious were greatly quickened. I was often much blessed in my own soul, and my hands lifted up, which were too apt to hang down. O how sweet to labor where the Lord gives his blessing, and 'sets open a door which no man can shut!'"

John King traveled, this year, the Norfolk Circuit, Va., and nearly doubled its members. Robert Williams, and three other preachers, labored on the Brunswick Circuit, in the same colony. We have already had allusions to his success. "In the latter part of the year there was a

[11] Richard Watson: "Observations on Southey's Life of Wesley."

remarkable revival of religion in most of the circuits. Christians were much united, and much devoted to God, and sinners were greatly alarmed." "Indeed, the Lord wrought wonders among us during that year," writes the early historian, Jesse Lee. He wrote from his own observation, for it was in this year that the house of his father, Nathaniel Lee, was opened as a "preaching place" for the itinerants. The father became a Class Leader, and two of his sons, John and Jesse, traveling Preachers, taking rank among the most effective itinerants of their day. Young Jesse Lee was now going "many miles on foot," by night and by day, to attend the meetings of the circuit.[12] Jarratt, the evangelical Rector, was active in this revival; it was, in fact, but a continuance, with increased intensity, of that extraordinary religious excitement which has already been noticed as prevailing the preceding year throughout this part of the state. "In the spring of 1774, it was," says Jarratt, "more remarkable than ever. The word preached was attended with such energy that many were pierced to the heart. Tears fell plentifully from the eyes of the hearers, and some were constrained to cry out. A goodly number were gathered in, this year, both in my parish and in many of the neighboring counties. I formed several societies of those which were convinced or converted."[13] The power of this "Great Revival" was seen in the return of members from Virginia, at the end of the ecclesiastical year. The two circuits of the province became three; its less than three hundred Methodists multiplied to nearly a thousand. The members on Brunswick Circuit, the chief scene of the revival, increased, from less than two hundred and twenty, to eight hundred.

[12] Lee's Life of Lee, p. 50.

[13] "Brief Narrative," etc., in Asbury's Journals, i, 210.

Though some of the English Preachers had returned to England, and war between that country and the colonies was now imminent, Wesley sent out recruits to the small company of itinerants, for he believed that, whatever might be the issue of the political struggle, Methodism was now a permanent fact in the moral destiny of the New World, and should be thoroughly fortified for the future, the more so as the political troubles of the country would tend to retard its progress. Accordingly in 1774 James Dempster and Martin Rodda were sent out, accompanied by William Glendenning, who appears to have come with them as a volunteer, like Yearbry, the companion of Rankin and Shadford. They arrived in the latter part of the year, in time to relieve Asbury, in New York, as we have seen, for his labors in Philadelphia and Baltimore.[14]

Dempster was a Scotchman of good education, having studied at the University of Edinburgh. He traveled about ten years in the Wesleyan itinerancy, and Wesley's correspondence with him shows that he had the highest respect of that great man. At the American Conference of 1775 he was appointed to New York, but his health soon failed; he married, and the same year retired from the denomination. He joined the Presbyterian Church "with a distinct avowal of his adherence to the Wesleyan doctrines, of which his views never changed,"[15] and was "an acceptable minister of that Church as long as he lived."[16] He was settled as pastor of a society at Florida, Montgomery County, N. Y., where he was attacked with sudden disease in the pulpit, and died, ten

[14] Lednum, p. 143. Sandford and Wakeley say they arrived in 1775, an error. See Asbury's Jour., Nov. 9, 19, and 24, 1774.

[15] Letter of his son, Rev. Dr. Dempster, to Rev. Dr. Coggeshall. Coggeshall's Manuscript Life of Asbury, chap. 5.

[16] Sandford, p. 30.

days afterward, in 1804. He gave a son to Methodism, who has done distinguished service in its ministry, its missions, and its educational institutions.[17]

Martin Rodda had traveled about twelve years before his departure for America. He remained here less than three years, and incurred the animadversions of his brethren by imprudently intermeddling with the political controversies of the period. He is accused of having circulated over his circuit, in Delaware, the royal proclamation against the American patriots; and much of that fierce persecution which his brethren in the ministry suffered after his departure, as we shall soon see, was the consequence of his indiscretion.[18] He had to flee from the country, and made his escape, by the aid of slaves, to the British fleet, whence he was conveyed to Philadelphia, then in possession of the English army, and thence to England. He resumed his ministerial travels under Wesley, but in 1781 disappeared from the British Minutes.

Glendenning, after some years' service in the American itinerancy, followed the example of Dempster and left the denomination. This entire company, of what are called Wesley's American missionaries, seem to have been unfortunate in their relations to their American brethren. It was now a time that tried men's souls. "The dreadful cloud," writes Watters, "that had been hanging over us continued to gather, thicker and thicker, so that I was often bowed down before the God of the

[17] Lee (p. 318) marks the disappearance of James Dempster, from the Conference Minutes, unfavorably. Bangs (vol. iv, Alph. List, p. 11) uses an anomalous but charitable evasion. Asbury, and Lednum, (p. 143,) on his authority, allude disparagingly to him. It must be borne in mind, however, that marriage, and, especially, a change of denomination by an itinerant, were considered in that early day very grave matters, if not offenses.

[18] Ezekiel Cooper on Asbury, p. 81.

whole earth." In two or three years more all the English missionaries had fled from the country, or had left the denomination, except Asbury, whose loyalty to the Church was superior to his loyalty to the British throne. Providentially, however, a native ministry had not only been begun, in time for this exigency, but was about to be reinforced by some of the ablest men with which American Protestantism has been blessed. Not a few of them were already preparing, in comparative obscurity, for their great careers. They were to attain an importance in their own denomination, if not in the general Christianity of the land, hardly less imposing than that which at last distinguished their cotemporaries, the rising statesmen, the great founders of the Republic; and Asbury himself was, by his steadfastness, his administrative ability and success, to become, in the regards of the former, what Washington became in the regards of the latter. In the autumn of 1774, while the storm of war was lowering over the east, he wrote: "A solemn report was brought to the city to-day that the men-of-war had fired on Boston. A fear rose in my mind of what might be the event of this. But it was soon banished by considering, I must go on and mind my own business, which is enough for me, and leave all these things to the providence of God." Besides these public alarms, he had to endure, in submissive quietness, grievous inconveniences from the administration of Rankin; his plans of labor were defeated or checked by that honest but obstinate Englishman, whose foreign prejudices seemed to bewilder him amid the prevailing public agitations, and who entirely failed to comprehend the genius of the American people, and, with much good, entailed much mischief on American Methodism.

Darker days were now at hand. The country was rife,

not only with political clamors, but with the preparations of war. Methodism was to pass from its feeble infancy into vigorous adolescence, tested and strengthened by severest trials. The necessity of its mission in the new world was to be demonstrated, and its providential career fully opened by the most momentous revolution of modern states. We shall behold it hesitating not before the fiery ordeal which is to try it, but entering it courageously and communing there with "a form like the Son of God," and coming forth at last renewed in all its energies, "rejoicing as a strong man to run a race."

BOOK II.

FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR, TO THE EPISCOPAL ORGANIZATION OF METHODISM, 1775-1784.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLUTION AND METHODISM.

Effect of the Revolution on Methodism — Providential Character of the Revolution — It was the Normal Consequence of the Colonial History of the Country — It was not at first Rebellion, but a Struggle for the Maintenance of the British Constitution — Chatham's Vindication of the Colonies — Effect of the War on Religion — Desertion of their Church by the English Clergy — Return of English Methodist Preachers — Sufferings of the Methodist Itinerants — Asbury's Integrity — Wesley's "Calm Address" to the Colonies — The Sarcasm of Junius — Wesley and Johnson — Wesley corrects his Opinion on the Colonial Question — He predicts the Success of the Americans — His Address to his American Preachers.

The American Revolution was now impending and inevitable. It was to have a profound effect on Methodism, for American independence implied the independence of American Methodism. The latter virtually became independent at the breaking out of the war, and the constitution, which organized it into the "Methodist Episcopal Church," was to be adopted in about one year after the treaty of peace with Great Britain, and to precede the adoption of the Federal Constitution by about five years. The new Church was to be the first religious body of the country which should recognize, in its organic law, by a solemn declaration of its Articles of Religion, the new

Republic; the first to pay homage, in the persons of its chief representatives, its first Bishops, to the supreme Magistracy.

The Revolution was the normal, the necessary, that is to say, the providential consequence of the geographical condition and colonial training of the American people Territorially, these colonies were a vast empire, remote and defined from the rest of the civilized world, by an ocean whose waters stretched, between the two, from pole to pole. The country possessed resources for national prosperity unequaled in any other empire on the earth. In some of these resources, and those the most important for manufactures and commerce, it surpassed all other civilized nations combined. God never designed a people, in such circumstances, to be a perpetual dependency of a distant and less capable power. In the history of nations Providence means progress, and progress implies the necessary development of a people of superior capabilities, whether in race or in position, into superior relations with other nations.

The colonial training of the American people was, as we have seen, providentially correspondent with their destiny. Most of them had come to the new world for relief from religious oppressions or disabilities—Puritans and Quakers from England, Scotch Presbyterians from the north of Ireland, Palatines from the Rhine, Huguenots from France, Waldenses from Piedmont, Methodists from Ireland. It was impossible that such a people, when grown to social maturity, their settlements expanded to such contiguity that they blended, their various tongues nearly lost in a common language, should not become conscious of a community of interest in religious toleration and liberty, and a common hostility to the foreign system which had oppressed them and banished them

from the homes of their fathers. They needed but to hear the tocsin of revolt sounded through the land, to rise and rend the remaining shreds of traditional attachments which connected them with the foreign world And though this revolt was from the most liberal European government of the age, yet that government still retained ecclesiastical characteristics with which most of them had no sympathy, an Establishment to which most of them were hostile from ineradicable recollections of wrongs and sufferings, as well as from conscientious scruples. The hierarchy of Great Britain was to them a form of antichrist, and it was an integral part of the constitution of Great Britain. The religious ties of a people are their strongest social bond; the colonies, with local exceptions, had no longer any such ties with England, so far at least as its ecclesiastical system was concerned. Under that system their brethren, in the parent land, still suffered grievous disabilities. The "Five Mile Act," the "Conventicle Acts," the "Acts of Toleration," still imposed disparagements and oppressions which the American conscience could not but resent; for, however locally exempt from the execution of these obnoxious statutes, many of the Americans, being immigrants, had known their evil power, and had come from families and religious communions which still felt it. Down even till near half a century after the American Declaration of Independence, the Methodists, and other dissenters of England, struggled under these disabilities, interpreted by the judicial authorities in such manner as would have extinguished their chief religious powers had they not in 1810, chiefly under the leadership of Methodism, agitated the realm with remonstrances, and procured an act of Parliament which swept away the barbarous "Five Mile Act" and the "Conventicle Acts," and secured

religious liberty, for the first time, to the British people.[1]

The colonial population had also, as has been shown, received a thorough military training preparatory for the war of Independence. Its almost incessant wars with the savages, and especially the two French wars, (1744–1748 and 1755–1763,) had made its militia veterans; and Europe was at last surprised to find them, at the outbreak of the Revolution, not only brave enough to challenge the hitherto invincible arms of England, but competent to defeat them.

The people were in advance of the social condition of any European population of that period. They had been educated to self-government. In large portions of the country they had the best municipal systems then to be found on the earth; the maturest social order, managed throughout their cities, towns, and villages by themselves in "town meetings;" the least amount of pauperism and crime; the largest amount of popular intelligence, sustained by "common schools." Before the Revolution institutions for higher education had sprung up, from New Hampshire to Virginia; there were at least nine colleges and two medical schools, located at suitable intervals, in the most important colonies.

But, though thus morally as well as geographically severed from the parent land, and though the most far-seeing minds could not fail to perceive the coming independence, the public mind was not rash; it retained many affectionate remembrances of England. The people were not rebels; during many years the struggle was not for independence, but for their long-conceded, yet now invaded rights as subjects of the British Constitution. The moral sense of the colonies would not have allowed them

[1] History of the Religious Movement, etc., iii, p. 200.

to revolt from that constitution had it been justly administered. But after the overthrow of the French power in North America and the Treaty of Paris in 1763, by which most of the continent came under British control, it became the persistent policy of the home government to reduce the chartered liberties of the colonies, to consolidate the provinces, and to extend over them the power of the crown in a manner which was not only unauthorized by their charters, but would not have been tolerated among the people of England themselves. For years the Board of Trade attempted intolerable impositions on the commercial enterprise of the colonies. The independence of the judiciary was invaded. The "Stamp Act," more than ten years before the revolt of the colonies, at last made a breach that never could be repaired. It was not so much the pecuniary oppression of this act that offended the people, but its violation of the established principle of English liberty, that British subjects cannot be taxed without their consent in Parliament. Taxation without representation was the grievance. The act was repealed in less than one year, for it was found impossible to enforce it; but with its abrogation Parliament still declared its own power to bind the colonies in all cases whatsoever. The repeal of the act was not, therefore, a repeal of its oppressive principle. A year later another act of taxation was passed, but in three years this also was repealed, except the duty on tea; a single exception, however in itself unimportant, involved the fundamental question as really as a thousand or ten thousand; and the people, exasperated by continued oppression, not only refused to use tea, but burned it or threw it into the sea from the foreign ships in their harbors. Their forbearance had been long; they asked not a single new right, but the protection of the constitution; the most able

statesmen of England, Pitt, Burke, Fox, and others, defended their claim as just. Pitt, now in the House of Peers as Lord Chatham, had said, "This resistance to your arbitrary system of taxation might have been foreseen from the nature of things and of mankind; above all from the Whiggish spirit flourishing in that country. The spirit which now resists your taxation in America is the same which formerly opposed Loans, Benevolences, and Ship-Money in England; the same which, by the 'Bill of Rights,' vindicated the English Constitution; the same which established the essential maxim of your liberties, that no subject of England shall be taxed but by his own consent. Let this distinction, then, remain forever ascertained: taxation is theirs, commercial regulation is ours. They say you have no right to tax them without their consent; they say truly. I recognize to the Americans their supreme, unalienable right to their property; a right which they are justified in the defense of to the last extremity."[2] The colonial assemblies sent to England memorials, entreaties, and eminent messengers, among whom was Franklin, pledging their loyalty to the throne and praying for relief; but new and still more oppressive measures were enacted, especially toward Massachusetts. Troops were dispatched to the colonies. The latter began to prepare to defend themselves; they met in Congress; they raised forces; their purpose was stern, but it was deliberate and conscientious. They were willing yet to avert the alternative of war, of disunion. The first Congress declared (1774) to England its willingness to endure the severe commercial grievances of the system of 1763, if only the constitutional right of the colonies be maintained. "You have been told that we are impatient of government and desirous

[2] Bancroft, vii, p. 198.

of independency. These are calumnies. Permit us to be as free as yourselves, and we shall ever esteem a union with you to be our greatest glory and our greatest happiness. But if you are determined that your ministers shall wantonly sport with the rights of mankind; if neither the voice of justice, the dictates of law, the principles of the constitution, or the suggestions of humanity, can restrain your hands from shedding human blood in such an impious cause, we must then tell you that we will never submit to any ministry or nation in the world."[3] Such was the considerate but brave language of the representative assembly of the colonies, written by the purest statesman of modern times, John Jay. The city of London appealed to the king, sustaining the claim of the colonies and denouncing the policy of the government as an attempt of the Ministry to "establish arbitrary power over all America." But the clock of destiny was striking; the inevitable contest broke out in the year which we have now reached in the annals of American Methodism. Before the session of its next Conference blood was spilt at Concord and Lexington. The nation rose at once to arms. The possibility of reconciliation was gone forever, and the independent career of the new world began.

Thus considered, the American Revolution bore a moral character to which the American Methodists could not be indifferent. Neither they nor their native preachers were opposed to it, though the presence and controlling authority of their English missionaries held them somewhat in check and provoked against them public suspicion. War is always a crime on one side or the other of the contestants, and a crime of such contagious enormity that it is always demoralizing, temporarily, at least, to the communities which suffer from it, as well as

[3] Bancroft, vii, p. 148.

to those who inflict it. The cotemporaneous influence of the Revolution on the religious condition of the colonies was generally bad. Political and military events absorbed the public attention. Infidelity, especially through the influence of Thomas Paine, a conspicuous leader of the revolt, spread rapidly.[4] The colonial clergy of the English Church were mostly foreigners, and were loyal to the British Crown. We should not too readily condemn them for this fact. If their loyalty was a fault, it was a natural and pardonable consequence of their education. They quite generally deserted the country. We have seen that the first Legislature chosen by the people of Virginia established the Anglican Church, and that there was, the next year, a pastor for every six hundred of its population. We have seen also the Evangelical Virginian rector, Jarratt, writing to Wesley, as late as 1773, that the colony then had ninety-five parishes, all of which, except one, were supplied with clergymen. But he knew of but one, besides himself, who entertained evangelical sentiments, and the alarm of war was the signal for their general abandonment of their people. The historian of their Church in Virginia has recorded the fact in significant statistics. He says, "When the colonists first resorted to arms, Virginia, in her sixty-one counties, contained ninety-five parishes, sixty-four churches and chapels, and ninety-one clergymen. When the contest was over, she came out of the war with a large number of her churches destroyed or injured irreparably; with twenty-three of her ninety-five parishes extinct or forsaken, and of the remaining seventy-two, thirty-four were destitute of ministerial services; while of her ninety-one clergymen

[4] Paine's chief work, "The Age of Reason," was published later, but his opinions were generally circulated.

twenty-eight only remained, who had lived through the storm, and these, with eight others, who came into the state soon after the struggle terminated, supplied thirty-six of the parishes. Of these twenty-eight, fifteen only had been enabled to continue in the churches which they supplied prior to the commencement of hostilities, and thirteen had been driven from their cures by violence or want, to seek safety or comfort in some one of the many vacant parishes, where they might hope to find, for a time at least, exemption from the extremity of suffering.[5] It was this prostration of the English Church in the colonies that rendered necessary—providential, it may be said, without uncharitableness—the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as we shall hereafter see.

Meanwhile the latter was relieved, by the Revolution, of its foreign missionaries and of foreign control. It was launched upon the tide of events to be managed by native men, except one, Asbury, whose far-seeing wisdom and generous sympathy with the colonial cause, if they could not at first completely counteract his British loyalty, so far qualified it as to restrain him from any rash concession to it, and kept him in the country, till the providential course of events fully revealed to him his duty to remain with the infant Church, and at last to recognize heartily the liberation of the colonies as the beneficent will of God. The imitation of the example of the Anglo-American clergy, by the Anglo-American Methodist preachers, brought severe suffering upon the Methodist ministry generally. "They had," says one of them, who witnessed their afflictions, "almost insupportable difficulties, violent oppositions, bitter persecutions, and grievous sufferings to endure. So many of the

[5] Hawks's Contributions, etc., p. 153.

preachers being Englishmen, and Wesley, who was considered the founder and chief ruler of the Methodist societies, being in England, and known to be loyal to his king, and of course unfriendly to the American measures, occasioned jealousies and suspicions that the Methodists were, politically, a dangerous people. Also the moral views and the conscientious scruples of the people called Methodists, not being favorable, on general principles, to the spirit and practice of war, on this ground also, the temper of the times, combining with other prejudices and passions of the day, excited jealousies which occasioned an evil report or alarm that the Methodists, preachers and people, were opposed to the American Revolution. However untrue or incorrect these inferences were, yet nevertheless, perhaps, some of the Methodists were to blame. I do not hesitate to admit the improper conduct of some. I feel no disposition to conceal that a few of the preachers were imprudent and reprehensible in some things, and gave too much cause for such suspicions. Rodda, in particular, acted improperly, and left the country under circumstances unfavorable to his reputation, and hurtful to the cause of religion. Captain Webb also did not act so well as he ought to have done. Rankin likewise had spoken so freely and imprudently on public affairs as to excite the jealous fear that his influence would be dangerous to the American cause. So it was that the way of the preachers on every side was almost hedged up; and for a considerable time it was with the utmost difficulty, and at the greatest risk of personal safety, that they could travel and preach at all."[6]

Asbury, however, is acquitted of any such blame by this cotemporaneous authority. The conduct of his

[6] Cooper on Asbury, p. 80.

English coadjutors, we are assured, was "considered by him exceptionable and unjustifiable." "When the times were about the worst, Asbury and Shadford agreed to make it a matter of fasting and prayer for direction, in their straits and difficulties, what to do; whether to stay in the country, or return to England. Shadford concluded that he had an answer to leave the country and return to England; but Asbury, who received an answer to stay, replied, 'If you are called to go, I am called to stay; so here we must part.' Accordingly they parted, to meet no more on earth. From that moment he made America his country and his home. He resolved to abide among us, and at the risk of all, even of life itself, to continue to labor and to suffer with and for his American brethren. Oppositions, reproaches, and persecutions rushed in against them from every quarter like a tempest. During the whole period of conflict and danger his manner of life was irreproachable. His prudence and caution as a man and a citizen, his pious and correct deportment as a Christian and a minister, were such as to put at defiance the suspicious mind and the tongue of slander. They were never able to substantiate any allegation, or the appearance of a charge against him, that was incompatible with the character of a citizen, a Christian, or a faithful minister of the Gospel. He never meddled with politics; but in those days of suspicion and alarm, to get a preacher or a society persecuted it was only necessary to excite suspicion, sound the alarm, and cry out 'Enemies to the country!' or 'Tories!'"

This same high authority draws a dark picture of the sufferings of the Methodist ministry during these trying times. "I shall," he says, "principally confine myself to Maryland, my native state, where I was best acquainted, and where probably their sufferings were as great, per-

haps greater, than in any other state. The prejudices of the people ran high, and some of the laws, to meet the exigencies of the times, were hard and oppressive; some of the rulers and civil officers appeared disposed to construe every apparent legal restriction with rigor against the Methodists. Some of the preachers were mulcted or fined, and others were imprisoned, for no other offense than traveling and preaching the Gospel; and others were bound over in bonds, and heavy penalties, and sureties, not to preach in this or that county. Several were arrested and committed to the common county jail; others were personally insulted and badly abused; some were beaten with stripes and blows nigh unto death, and carried their scars down to the grave. Our aged and much respected Garrettson, now sitting among us, knows the truth of these statements, for he was himself one of the sufferers. He was, for preaching the Gospel, committed to prison in one county; and severely beaten and wounded, even to the shedding of blood, nigh unto death, in another. In giving a further view of those trying scenes and times of distress, I will briefly state a few particular cases, to show what our first preachers had to endure and suffer while planting the Gospel among us. In the city of Annapolis, the capital of the state, Jonathan Forrest and William Wren, and I believe two or three others, were committed to jail; three of the men who were principally concerned in taking up and committing Wren afterward became Methodists, among whom was one of the magistrates who signed the mittimus for his commitment. I knew them well, and shall never forget the serious and solemn time when Wren and myself, with the man who arrested him, dined at the magistrate's house after they joined the Methodists. In Prince George County a preacher was shamefully mal

treated by a mob; 'honored,' according to the cant of the times, 'with tar and feathers.' In Queen Anne, Joseph Hartley was bound over in penal bonds of five hundred pounds not to preach in the county. In the same county Freeborn Garrettson was beaten with a stick by one of the county judges, and pursued on horseback till he fell from his horse and was nearly killed. In Talbot County, Joseph Hartley was whipped by a young lawyer, and was imprisoned a considerable time. He used to preach, during his confinement, through the grates or window of the jail to large concourses of people on Sabbath days. They frequently came from ten to fifteen miles to hear him, and even from other counties. His confinement produced a great excitement, and God overruled it for good to the souls of many. Christ was preached, and numbers embraced religion. Even his enemies at length were glad to have him discharged. In Dorchester, Caleb Pedicord was whipped and badly hurt upon the public road; he carried his scars to the grave. In the same county Garrettson was committed to jail. In Caroline a preacher was taken up in a lawless manner and put into the custody of the sheriff to be taken to jail; but there was no mittimus for his commitment, nor any legal cause for his detention; however, the sheriff prudently received him into his care and protection from the rage of his enemies, and after giving him a hospitable entertainment in his own house let him go. In the same county Joseph Foster was brought before the court, and thrown into troubles, expenses, and costs. We might, perhaps, with propriety notice some other cases in different counties and states, both North and South, of the sufferings both of preachers and members; but time would fail. From these brief sketches some tolerably correct though faint idea may be formed of what our first preachers had to endure,

and how great were their conflicts. They spent their all—their time, their blood, their lives—to win souls to Christ. Under all these embarrassing and perplexing circumstances the preachers, with Asbury at their head, went on, publicly and privately, in their indefatigable labors. They counted all things but loss, and their lives not dear to themselves, so that they might gain Christ, win souls, and finish the ministry and work committed unto them. The Lord was with them as they passed through the fires and the waters; he gave them grace sufficient for the evil days. They saw the pleasure of the Lord prosper in their hands; many were awakened and converted. The wilderness and the solitary places were glad, the parched ground became springs of water, and the desert blossomed as the rose. I lived then as a spectator and a witness; I stand as a witness yet, and probably am able to bear testimony."

These troubles were exasperated by the publication of Wesley's "Calm Address" to the colonies, copies of which appeared in America. Junius satirized him as actuated by a sordid motive, as "having one eye upon a pension, the other upon heaven." Wesley's characteristic disregard of money renders the charge ridiculous to all who are familiar with his history. He was now one of the most conspicuous men of England; hardly any public interest or question escaped his attention. He was in the habit of publishing incessantly abridged or cheap books for his numerous people; it is probable that no ecclesiastical personage of the realm swayed a wider influence over the masses on questions involving, directly or indirectly, religious interests; and the question of the loyalty of the colonies seemed to him to involve gravely the prospects of Christianity in the new world. The government knew him too well to approach him with

overtures of preferment, or other reward. To Fletcher, who wrote in defense of his "Calm Address," it offered promotion; but that saintly man replied, "I only want more of the grace of God." Wesley's error, in this publication, afforded him a signal advantage at last; the opportunity, in the same year, of frankly correcting himself, and of acknowledging the right of the colonies in their stern quarrel. His "Calm Address" was, in fact, but a reproduction, in a cheap form, of the pamphlet of his friend Dr. Johnson, entitled "Taxation no Tyranny." His relations with the "great moralist" were intimate Johnson revered him, and delighted in his company.[7] It was Johnson's influence that led him into the error of this publication, for he had entertained a different view of the question till he read Johnson's pamphlet.[8] Though in his brief reproduction of the essay he made no allusion to Johnson, the latter felt himself highly complimented by the publication, and returned the compliment in one of his most polished paragraphs.[9]

The day of Lexington and Concord struck Europe with surprise, and gave a new and stern argument, on the question, to thoughtful Englishmen. Wesley saw its significance at once. Waiting but one day, after the ar-

[7] See Hist. of the Relig. Movement, etc., ii, pp. 129, 200. "He talks well," said Johnson to Boswell; "I could converse with him all night."

[8] Wesley's Prefaee to the second edition. Works, vol. vi. Am. Ed.

[9] "I have thanks likewise to return you for the addition of your important suffrage to my argument on the American question. To have gained such a mind as yours may justly confirm me in my own opinion. What effect my paper has upon the public I know not; but I have no reason to be discouraged. The lecturer was surely in the right who, though he saw his audience slinking away, refused to quit the chair while Plato stayed."—*Gentleman's Magazine*, 1797, p. 455, and *Boswell's Johnson*, *anno* 1776. Wesley's inveterate opponent, Toplady, assailed him, for this use of Johnson's essay, as a plagiarist, in a virulent pamphlet entitled "An old Fox Tarred and Feathered." In his second edition Wesley gave Johnson full credit.

rival of the news, he wrote to Lord North and the Earl of Dartmouth, severally, an emphatic letter. "I am," he said, "a High-Churchman, the son of a High-Churchman, bred up from my childhood in the highest notions of passive obedience and non-resistance, and yet, in spite of all my long-rooted prejudices, I cannot avoid thinking these, an oppressed people, asked for nothing more than their legal rights, and that in the most modest and inoffensive manner that the nature of the thing would allow. But waiving this, I ask, Is it common sense to use force toward the Americans? Whatever has been affirmed, these men will not be frightened, and they will not be conquered easily. Some of our valiant officers say that 'two thousand men will clear America of these rebels.' No, nor twenty thousand, be they rebels or not, nor perhaps treble that number. They are strong; they are valiant; they are one and all enthusiasts; enthusiasts for liberty, calm, deliberate enthusiasts. In a short time they will understand discipline as well as their assailants. But you are informed 'they are divided among themselves.' So was poor Rehoboam informed concerning the ten tribes; so was Philip informed concerning the people of the Netherlands. No; they are terribly united; they think they are contending for their wives, children, and liberty. Their supplies are at hand, ours are three thousand miles off. Are we able to conquer the Americans suppose they are left to themselves? We are not sure of this, nor are we sure that all our neighbors will stand stock still."[10]

[10] Smith's Hist. of Wes. Meth., i, p. 726. Hist. of the Relig. Movement, etc., ii, p. 130. Bancroft, vii, 345. I am happy to acknowledge, in behalf of the Methodist community, their obligations to Mr. Bancroft, who, when this important document was brought under his notice, had the candor to qualify by it his former allusions to Wesley, though in order to do so it was necessary to cancel one or more of his

In this same year Wesley wrote important advice to his American preachers. "You were never in your lives," he said, "in so critical a situation as you are at this time. It is your part to be peacemakers: to be loving and tender to all; but to addict yourselves to no party. In spite of all solicitations, of rough or smooth words, say not one word against one or the other side. Keep yourselves pure; do all you can to help and soften all; but beware how you adopt another's jar. See that you act in full union with each other: this is of the utmost consequence. Not only let there be no bitterness or anger, but no shyness or coldness between you. Mark all those that would set one against the other. Some such will never be wanting. But give them no countenance; rather ferret them out, and drag them into open day." [11]

These counsels were sent to them in time for their next annual assembly. Following them faithfully, they passed through the trying period with unexpected prosperity. While the contest arrested the progress of all other religious bodies, the Methodists, with but occasional and slight declensions, advanced rapidly during most of the time of the war.

The Revolution prepared them, it has been said, for their organization as a distinct denomination, and opened before them that career of success which at last advanced them to the van of the Protestantism of the nation. It may indeed be affirmed that American Meth-

stereotype plates. He inserts a large extract from the letter in the sixth edition of his seventh volume. The Methodist denomination will congratulate itself that its venerated founder is thus, almost for the first time in civil history, fairly represented in respect to this question, and that this justice has been accorded in a work which, by its remarkable merits, will be as immortal as its theme.

[11] Bangs, i, 115.

odism was born, and passed its whole infancy, in the invigorating struggle of the Revolution. In the year (1760) in which Embury and his fellow Palatines arrived, the Lords of Trade advised the taxing of the colonies, and the agitations of the latter commenced. The next year James Otis, the "morning star" of the Revolution, began his appeals in Boston for the rights of the people. The following year the whole continent was shaken by the royal interference with the colonial judiciary, especially at New York; and Otis attacked, in the Massachusetts legislature, the English design of taxation as planned by Charles Townshend. Offense followed offense from the British ministry, and surge followed surge in the agitations of the colonies. The year preceding that in which the John-street Church was formed is memorable as the date of the Stamp Act; the Church was founded amid the storm of excitement which compelled the repeal of the act in 1766—the recognized epoch of American Methodism. The next year a new act of taxation was passed which stirred the colonies from Maine to Georgia, and "The Farmer's Letters," by John Dickinson of Pennsylvania, appeared—the foundation rock of American politics and American statesmanship. In two years more the Massachusetts legislature "planned resistance." Samuel Adams approved of making the "appeal to heaven"—of war—and British ships and troops were ordered to Boston. The first Annual Conference of American Methodism was held in the stormy year (1773) in which the British ministry procured the act respecting tea, which was followed by such resistance that the ships bringing that luxury were not allowed to land their cargoes in Philadelphia and New York, were only allowed to store them, not to sell them, in South Carolina, and were boarded in Boston harbor and the freight thrown

into the sea. In the next year the Boston Port Bill inflamed all the colonies; "a General Congress" was held; Boston was blockaded; Massachusetts was in a "general rising;" then came the year of Lexington, and Concord, and Bunker Hill, introducing the "War of Revolution," with its years of conflict and suffering. Thus Methodism began its history in America in the storm of the Revolution; its English missionaries were arriving or departing amid the ever increasing political agitation; it was cradled in the hurricane, and hardened into vigorous youth, by the severities of the times, till it stood forth, the next year after the definitive treaty of peace, the organized "Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States of America." Its almost continual growth in such apparently adverse circumstances is one of the marvels of religious history. In 1776 it was equal, in both the number of its preachers and congregations, to the Lutherans, the German Reformed, the Reformed Dutch, the Associate Church, the Moravians, or the Roman Catholics.[13] At the close of the war it ranked fourth or fifth among the dozen recognized Christian denominations of the country. During the war it had more than quadrupled both its ministry and its members.

In less than a month after the conflicts of Lexington and Concord, while the whole country resounded with the din of military preparations, the little company of American itinerants wended doubtfully their way again to Philadelphia, for their third annual Conference. In due time we shall meet them there.

[13] Compare Minutes of 1776 with Baird's estimate, p. 210, note.

CHAPTER II.

LABORS AND TRIALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Asbury's Course respecting the Revolution — He goes to Norfolk — Alarms of War — Burial of Robert Williams — Methodists in Virginia — Asbury on Brunswick Circuit — Shadford there — His great Success — Examples — Conversion of a Dancing-master — Of a Planter — The "Great Revival" of Virginia — Jarratt's Account of it — Jarratt and Asbury — Asbury in Baltimore — His Opinion of Wesley's Pamphlet on the Colonial Question — Visits the Hot Sulphur Springs — On Baltimore Circuit — His Character — Embarrassments from the War — Return of the English Preachers — Asbury in Peril — In Retirement — Abduction of Judge White — Eminent Methodists — Judge White — Mary White — Senator Bassett — Bohemia Manor — Judge Barrett — "Barrett's Chapel" — Asbury's Visits to it in later Life — His Influence on the Higher Circles of Society — Abroad again — His extraordinary Travels — He meets Coke at Barrett's Chapel.

Asbury prudently determined not to compromise himself, with either the home or colonial government, in the contest now beginning. His work was one: "to promote the kingdom of heaven," the kingdom of peace, and he wished to pursue his single task with such circumspection that, whatever might be the issue of the struggle, he should remain unimpeachable, and his ability to continue his evangelical labors unimpaired. Though his sympathies were evidently with the colonies, yet as an Englishman, recently from the parent country and expecting sooner or later to return, it was befitting that he should give no occasion of offense to his countrymen, especially as he believed politics foreign to his office. The result of the contest was yet uncertain to himself at least; it was not expedient, therefore, if he were

even to be providentially detained in America for life, that he should so far commit himself in the quarrel as, were the colonies to fail, his ministrations among them should be embarrassed after the restoration of peace. His policy was to follow strictly the advice of Wesley's last letter. He urged it also upon his fellow-laborers.

From the Conference at Philadelphia in 1775 he went by sea to Norfolk, Virginia, his new appointment. "Here," he says, "I found about thirty persons in Society after their manner; but they had no regular class-meetings. However, here are a few who are willing to observe all the rules of our Society. Their present preaching-house is an old shattered building, which has formerly been a play-house. Surely the Lord will not always suffer his honor to be trampled in the dust. No; I entertain a hope that we shall have a house and a people in this town. My heart is filled with holy thoughts, and deeply engaged in the work of God. On Tuesday evening about one hundred and fifty souls attended to hear the word, and about fifty at five o'clock on Wednesday morning, which, by the presence of the Lord, was found to be a good time. I then went over to Portsmouth, and found my spirit at liberty in preaching to a number of souls there."

"My body is weak," he adds, "but my soul is in a sweet pacific frame. I see the need of constant watchfulness and entire devotion to God." Of course he soon formed a large circuit, with Norfolk for his head-quarters, and comprising Portsmouth and at least eight minor places. A subscription was started for a chapel in Norfolk. Discipline was enforced, though "some of the members seemed a little refractory in submitting" to it. "But," he characteristically remarks, "without discipline we should soon be a rope of sand; so that it must be

enforced, let who will be displeased." Following the example of Wesley, he preached frequently at five o'clock in the morning, though, he says, "I have constant inward fever and drag a cumbersome body with me." The alarm of war was sounding through the land, and Rankin wrote him that he and other English preachers, after consultation, had determined to return to England; "but," writes Asbury, "I can by no means agree to leave such a field for gathering souls to Christ as we have in America. It would be an eternal dishonor to the Methodists that we should all leave three thousand souls who desire to commit themselves to our care; neither is it the part of a good shepherd to leave his flock in time of danger: therefore I am determined, by the grace of God, not to leave them, let the consequence be what it may. Our friends here appeared to be distressed above measure at the thoughts of being forsaken by the preachers. So I wrote my sentiments both to Mr. Rankin and Mr. Shadford."

Such, in these troubled times, was Asbury, the predestined apostle of American Methodism. He writes on the next Sabbath, "My own soul was enlarged in preaching, and on Monday I spoke both morning and evening; but we were interrupted by the clamor of arms and preparations of war. My business is, to be more intensely devoted to God. Then,

> "The rougher the way,
> The shorter our stay;
> The tempests that rise
> Shall gloriously hurry our souls to the skies."

He was now in the scene of Robert Williams's labors, the founder of Methodism in Virginia. Williams had married in the preceding year, and settled on the road between Norfolk and Suffolk. He continued to preach

far and near, and his house was a home and preaching place for Asbury. In the autumn of 1775 he died; Asbury laid him to rest, with a funeral sermon, and pronounced upon him, as we have seen, the emphatic eulogy "that probably no man in America had been equally successful in awakening souls." The loss of this useful man was a saddening addition to the calamities of the times in the little communion of the Virginia Methodists. Asbury felt it; yet a week later he wrote: "I was greatly enlarged in preaching both at Norfolk and Portsmouth, and I venture to hope some good was done. But martial clamors confuse the land. However, my soul shall rest in God during this dark and cloudy day. He has his way in the whirlwind, and will not fail to defend his own ark."

During his stay in this region he systematized the circuit work, and established rigid disciplinary order among his Societies. But in the next winter Norfolk was burned down by the royalists, and Methodism was extinguished there till the beginning of the present century. In 1803 Asbury found in the city a new chapel, the best in the state. In Portsmouth no Methodist Church was erected till 1800. Methodism took deep root in Virginia, but the ravages of war retarded all its plans for permanent edifices. Its people were content to worship in barns and private houses till the hurricane had passed. Asbury became devotedly attached to them, and his Journals show that he spent more of his long life among them than in any other state of the Union. He was to preach his last sermon, and fall in his work, in Virginia.

In November he left Norfolk for the Brunswick Circuit, still the scene of extraordinary religious activity. In taking his leave he writes: "I am now bound for

Brunswick. Some that had been displeased with my strictness in discipline were now unwilling to let me go; but I fear they will not soon see me again, if they should even say, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.' I am deficient in many things, but my conscience bears me witness that I have been faithful to these souls both in preaching and in discipline." Ominous signs of the war were now breaking out around him. When he arrived at Southampton Court-house, he was arrested by a committee appointed to examine strangers; but, after explanations, was allowed to proceed. Some of his brethren, who were on their way to Portsmouth, were, however, not allowed to pass the guards. "Lord, help thy people to redeem the time," he exclaims, "for the times are evil. I see the necessity of living to God, and of improving our present privileges." About a month later he writes: "We have awful reports of slaughter at Norfolk and the Great Bridge; but I am at a happy distance from them, and my soul keeps close to Christ. And as we know not what a day may bring forth, I can say with St. Paul, 'For me to live is Christ, but to die is gain.'" In a fortnight he hears of the burning of Norfolk.

At the Conference of 1775 Shadford and four other laborers had been appointed to the Brunswick Circuit, and were now sweeping, like flames of fire, over its extensive field. Shadford had gone thither in deep dejection, for he was "a stranger in a strange land," he says; "but," he adds, "I often felt much of this before a remarkable manifestation of the power and presence of God. In preaching and prayer the Lord strips and empties before he fills. I saw myself so vile and worthless as I cannot express, and wondered that God should employ me in his work. I was amazed when I first be-

gan to preach in Virginia; for I seldom preached a sermon but some were convinced and converted, often three or four at a time. I could scarcely believe them when they told me." Among them were some of the "characters" of the times, the leaders of its rustic dissipations, whose reformation became an influential example. "One of these was a dancing-master, who came first to hear on a week-day, dressed in scarlet, and came several miles again on Sunday dressed in green. After preaching he spoke to me, and asked if I could come to the part where he lived some day in the week. I told him I could not, as I was engaged every day. I saw him at preaching again that week, and another man of his profession. When I was going to preach one morning a friend said to me, 'You spoiled a fine dancing-master last week. He was so cut under preaching, and feels such a load of sin upon his conscience, that he moves very heavily; nay, he cannot shake his heels at all. He had a large, profitable school, but hath given it up and intends to dance no more. He intends now to teach reading, writing, and arithmetic.' I said, 'It is very well; what is his name?' 'He is called Madcap.' 'A very proper name for a dancing-master,' I said; but I found that this was only a nickname, his real name being Metcalf." This example, if apparently of doubtful importance, was not so to the itinerant; the eccentric convert became one of the most encouraging proofs of his ministry. "He began to teach a school, joined our Society, found the pardoning love of God shed abroad in his heart, by the Holy Ghost given unto him; lived six or seven years, and died a great witness for God, having been one of the most devoted men in our connection."

Not a few of the wealthy planters of the colony were in a moral condition hardly above heathenism; for their

religious instruction, by the established clergy, had been incredibly desultory and defective. Methodism took strong hold of many of them, and, consecrating their local influence, rendered them greatly useful among their neighbors. "Going to preach one day," says Shadford, "I was stopped by a flood of water and could not reach the bridge. I therefore turned back to a large plantation, and having found the planter, I told him my case and asked him if I could sleep at his house. He said I was welcome. After I had taken a little refreshment I asked if that part of the country was well inhabited, and on his answering in the affirmative, I said, 'If it is agreeable, and you will send out to acquaint your neighbors, I will preach to them this evening.' He sent out, and we had many hearers, but they were as wild boars. After I had reproved them they behaved very well during the preaching. When I conversed with the planter and his wife, I found them entirely ignorant of themselves and of God. I labored to convince them both, but it seemed to little purpose. Next morning I was stopped again, when he kindly offered to show me another way some miles about, and go with me to preaching. I thanked him and accepted his offer. As I was preaching that day I saw him weeping much. The Spirit of God opened the poor creature's eyes, and he saw the wretched state he was in. He stayed with me that night, and made me promise to go again to his house and preach there. In a short time he and his wife became true penitents, and were soundly converted by the power of God." This case is not recorded by him for its individual importance alone, but because it became the foundation of a local "appointment" and a Church. "A very remarkable work," he adds, "began from this little circumstance; and before I left Virginia there were sixty or seventy

raised up in Society in that settlement. There were four traveling preachers that year in the circuit. We added eighteen hundred members, and had good reason to believe that a thousand of them were converted to God."

Young Jesse Lee witnessed this "remarkable" interest, as his home was one of the preaching stations of the circuit. He writes that, "In the course of this year there was a gracious work in several places, but in none did it equal that on Brunswick Circuit, where George Shadford was traveling at that time. It was quite common for sinners to be seized with trembling and shaking, and to fall down as if they were dead; and many were convulsed from head to foot, while others retained the use of their tongues, so as to pray while lying helpless on the floor. Christians, too, were sometimes so overcome with the presence and love of God as not to be able to stand on their feet. Mr. Jarratt, the Church clergyman, was very useful in this revival, and his heart was closely united to the Methodists. He would frequently preach, meet the classes, hold love-feasts, and administer the sacraments among them. He was an eye-witness of this work; and as it was the greatest revival of religion that had ever been known in that part of the country, I think it will be a satisfaction to many to give a further account of it." He proceeds to say that the excitement extended into the southern parts of Virginia, and was the "most remarkable reformation ever known, perhaps, in country places, in so short a time" It continued into the ensuing year. Shadford still preached in Virginia, and his ministry was attended with extraordinary scenes. "On the second day of a Quarterly Meeting," continues the historian, "a Love-Feast was held. As soon as it began, the power of the

Lord came down on the assembly like a rushing, mighty wind; and it seemed as if the whole house was filled with the presence of God. A flame kindled and ran from heart to heart. Many were deeply convinced of sin; many mourners were filled with consolation; and many believers were so overwhelmed with love that they could not doubt but God had enabled them to love him with all their hearts. When the Love-Feast was ended the doors were opened. Many who had stayed without then came in, and beholding the anguish of some and the rejoicing of others, were filled with aston ishment, and not long after with trembling apprehen sions of their own danger. Several of them, prostrating themselves before God, cried aloud for mercy. And the convictions which then began in many have terminated in a happy and lasting change. The multitudes that attended on this occasion, returning home all alive to God, spread the flame through their respective neighborhoods, so that within four weeks several hundreds found the peace of God. Scarce any conversation was to be heard, throughout the circuit, but concerning the things of God. In many large companies one careless person could not be seen; and the far greater part seemed perfectly happy in a clear sense of the love of God. This work in a very short time spread through Dinwiddie, Amelia, Brunswick, Sussex, Prince George, Lunenberg, and Mecklenberg Counties. It thus increased on every side; more preachers were soon wanted; and the Lord raised up several young men, who were exceedingly useful as local preachers." Lee himself was one of the most conspicuous of these local evangelists. He continues: "In the course of the summer Thomas Rankin came to Virginia, and on the last day of June he preached, for the first time, at Boisseau's (Bushill's) Chapel, where

Mr. Shadford met him, and they had preaching in the forenoon and afternoon; but before the last sermon was ended, such a power descended that many fell to the floor and seemed to be filled with the presence of God. The chapel was full of people, and many were without that could not get in. Look which way one would, he might behold streaming eyes, and but little could be heard except strong cries to God for mercy. It might be truly said, 'this is none other than the house of God! This is the gate of heaven!' Husbands and wives were inviting each other to go with them to heaven; parents and children entreating each other. In short, those who were happy in God themselves were for bringing all their friends to him in their arms. This mighty effusion of the Spirit continued for more than an hour, in which time many were awakened, some found peace with God, and others experienced perfect love. The preachers attempted to speak or sing again and again, but their voices were soon drowned. Mr. Rankin commanded the people to be silent, but all in vain; and it was with difficulty that they could be persuaded, as night drew on, to retire to their own houses. Such a work of God as that was I had never seen or heard of before. It continued to spread through the southern parts of Virginia and the adjacent parts of North Carolina all that summer and autumn. When the returns of members were made to the Conference this year there had been added to the Societies, on Brunswick Circuit, eight hundred and eleven members. But if we include Hanover Circuit and Caroline, which had been united to Brunswick, there had been added, in one year, eighteen hundred members. I have spoken largely of this revival of religion, but my pen cannot describe one half of what I saw, heard, and felt. I might write a volume on this subject, and then

leave the greater part untold."[1] Such was the success with which the militant Preachers of Methodism pushed forward their conquests amid the tumults of the Revolutionary War. This "Great Revival" was as remarkable, in some respects more remarkable, than the "Great Awakening," under Edwards, in New England. It was more durable. I have had occasion to cite frequently the report which Jarratt made of it to Rankin for Wesley. He says, "One of the doctrines, as you know, which we particularly insist upon, is that of a present salvation; a salvation not only from the guilt and power, but also from the root of sin; a cleansing from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, that we may perfect holiness in the fear of God; a going on to perfection, which we sometimes define by loving God with all our hearts. Several who had believed were deeply sensible of their want of this. And I have been present when they believed that God answered this prayer, and bestowed this blessing upon them. We have sundry witnesses of this perfect love who are above all suspicion. I have known the men and their communication for many years, and have ever found them zealous for the cause of God, men of sense and integrity, patterns of piety and humility. It has been frequently observed that there never was any remarkable revival of religion but some degree of enthusiasm was mingled with it, some wildfire mixed with the sacred flame. It may be doubted whether this is not unavoidable in the nature of things. This work has not been quite free from it; but it never rose to any considerable height, neither was of long continuance. Some of our assemblies resembled the congregation of the Jews at laying the foundation of the second temple in the days

[1] Lee's History, etc., pp. 53–59. He borrows largely from Jarratt's 'Narrative."

of Ezra; some wept for grief, others shouted for joy. Upon the whole, this has been a great, a deep, a swift, and an extensively glorious work. Both the nature and manner of it have been nearly the same, wherever its benign influence reached."

Writing in September, 1776, Jarratt says: "If you ask, 'How stands the case now with those that have been the subjects of the late work?' I have the pleasure to inform you I have not heard of any one apostate yet. Upon the whole, things are in as flourishing a condition as can reasonably be expected, considering what great numbers, of various capacities and stations, have lately been added to the Societies."[2]

As Asbury approached the Brunswick Circuit he wrote, "God is at work in this part of the country, and my soul catches the holy fire already." On Sunday, 5th of November, he met Shadford at a rural chapel. "My spirit," he wrote, "was much united to him, and our meeting was like that of Jonathan and David. We had a large congregation, and I was much comforted among them. Monday, 6, I moved on toward our Quarterly Meeting; but in fording Meherring River the water was so deep as almost to flood my horse and carriage. On Tuesday our Quarterly Meeting began, at which there might be seven hundred people. What great things hath the Lord wrought for the inhabitants of Virginia! Great numbers of them manifest a desire to seek salvation for their souls." At this meeting Francis Poythress, James Foster, and Joseph Hartley were received as traveling preachers. We shall hear of them again. "I had great satisfaction," continues Asbury, "in preaching both Tuesday and Wednesday, and was much pleased with the manner and matter of the Christians' testimony in the

[2] Jarratt's "Narrative," in Asbury's Journals, i, p. 208.

love-feast, having a correspondent witness of the same in my own breast. Friday, 10, I preached at B. J.'s, and the power of the Lord was present, melting the hearts of the audience; and in class-meeting both believers and penitents were all in tears. I have now a blooming prospect of usefulness, and hope both to do good and get good. My heart goes out in grateful thanksgiving and praises to God."

Early in January he meets Jarratt, who reports still a "great work" under Shadford's preaching. The good rector unites with the itinerant in holding a Watch Night, at which they "stand about two hours each," preaching to an eager throng, among whom, says Asbury, "there appeared a great degree of divine power." Jarratt is with him also at the Quarterly Conference of the circuit, where the Rector preaches and administers the Lord's supper. Asbury, soon after, visits his parsonage and finds in him "an agreeable spirit."

The Rector had now formed very intimate relations with the Methodists, and promised Asbury to share in the proceedings of the next Annual Conference, should it be convenient for him to attend it. After spending about a month in itinerating with him, Asbury set out for the North, called thither by Rankin. On arriving in Baltimore the alarms of war met him again; he found the city in commotion, caused by a report that a ship-of-war was approaching. Many of the inhabitants were hurrying out of town. "The congregations," he wrote, "were but small, so great has the consternation been. But I know the Lord governeth the world; therefore these things shall not trouble me. I will endeavor to be ready for life or death." He was welcomed to the tranquil retreat of Perry Hall by his friend Gough, and preached there to a great congregation. On the 19th of March,

1776, he reached Philadelphia, having "rode about three thousand miles" since he left it, on the 22d of the preceding May. Here, on receiving a letter from Wesley, he records his sentiments respecting the Revolution, cautiously, but with sufficient distinctness to show that he did not share the opinions of his English coadjutors. Of Wesley he says, "I am truly sorry that the venerable man ever dipped into the politics of America. My desire is to live in love and peace with all men; to do them no harm, but all the good I can. However, it discovers Mr. Wesley's conscientious attachment to the government under which he lives. Had he been a subject of America, no doubt he would have been as zealous an advocate of the American cause. But some inconsiderate persons have taken occasion to censure the Methodists in America on account of his political sentiments." Soon afterward he received word from New York that "troops were being raised and intrenchments made in that city." "O Lord," he writes, "we are oppressed, undertake thou for us." He doubtless inclined to the side of the colonists; his sagacious mind foresaw the grand advantages of the national organization of the Anglo-Saxons in the opening new world, and the vision of the prospective triumphs of the Gospel, in his own denomination, probably rose luminously before him amid the clouds of the war-storm, though he knew that the restoration of peace would be followed by general prosperity and riches, which might divert many of his fellow-laborers from the hardships of the itinerancy. His own policy was cautiously defined; it was to prosecute his evangelical work without intermeddling with the conflicting parties. His work was sublimely apart from and above them all. A few days after his comments on Wesley's error he wrote, "How changeable are all things here, and especially in these

precarious times! but my determination is to cast all my care on the Lord, and bear with patience whatsoever may occur. May the Lord make me more indifferent both toward persons and things, and only intent on doing his will!" And, again, he says, his "soul enjoys a delightful sense of the divine favor, and is fixed on God as its center, though in the midst of tumults." "Glory to God, I can leave all the little affairs of this confused world to those men to whose province they pertain, and can comfortably go on in my proper business of instrumentally saving my own soul and those that hear me."

After spending some months in Philadelphia, rallying the Society from the public distractions, and making excursions into New Jersey and other parts of the country, where he found the young Churches desolated by the agitations of the war, he passed southward again on the last day of May, 1776. He is welcomed in Baltimore, and finds temporary shelter at Perry Hall; is refreshed by good news "of the glorious spread of the work of God in Virginia and North Carolina, where the Lord is still fulfilling his promise, and pouring out his Spirit on the people." He preaches for Otterbein, and remarks that "there are very few with whom he can find so much unity and freedom in conversation as with him." In one of his excursions he is arrested, taken before a magistrate, and "fined five pounds for preaching the Gospel." His health again fails, through excessive travel and preaching. He goes to the Warm Sulphur Springs of Virginia, accompanied by Gough, of Perry Hall; there he holds a meeting every night and preaches often in the open air. "My confidence," he writes, "is strong in the Lord, and accompanied with sweet consolation. My company and myself are quickened in our own souls, and the hearts of several others are under some religious impressions. But

the zealous conversation and prayers of Mr. Gough seem to move and melt the hearts of the people more than my preaching does. Lord, send by whom thou wilt: only send to the conviction and salvation of immortal souls. At this time Christ is all in all to me. My heart is sweetly occupied by his gracious Spirit."

His plan of relaxation and recuperation here is singular enough. He reads about a hundred pages a day; usually prays in public five times a day; preaches in the open air every other day; and lectures in prayer-meeting every evening. "And," he adds, "if it were in my power I would do a thousand times as much for such a gracious and blessed Master. But, in the midst of all my little employments, I feel myself as nothing, and Christ to me is all in all."

The accommodations at this celebrated resort were still of the most primitive kind. Asbury's "boarding house" was twenty feet by sixteen in size, "with seven beds and sixteen persons therein, and some noisy children." "So," he says, "I dwell among briars and thorns; but my soul is in peace." Doing here the work of half a score of ordinary pastors, yet surrounded with the grand and tranquil solitudes of nature, he richly enjoyed his retreat. But the din of war still reached him. "I spent," he writes, "some time in the woods alone with God, and found it a peculiar time of love and joy. O delighful employment! All my soul was centered in God! The next day while preaching at three o'clock, to an increased company, the word produced great seriousness and attention. And we had a happy, powerful meeting in the evening at Mr. Gough's. But my mind is in some degree disturbed by the reports of battles and slaughters. It seems the Cherokee Indians have also begun to break out, and the English ships have

been coasting to and fro, watching for advantages; but what can they expect to accomplish without an army of two or three hundred thousand men? And even then, there would be but little prospect of their success. O that this dispensation might answer its proper end! That the people would fear the Lord, and sincerely devote themselves to his service! Then, no doubt, wars and bloodshed would cease."

Having spent six weeks at the Springs, he left them for his Baltimore Circuit, where he resumed his travels with unresting energy. His journals are characteristically laconic; they abound in abbreviations which obscure, at this late day, their allusions; we are perplexed in tracing his journeyings, as he hurries us along from place to place; but we are kept in excited interest and wonder at his hardly intermitted movements, his continual preaching, in the morning at a chapel, in the afternoon at a barn or school-house ten or fifteen miles distant, in the evening at a private house twenty miles further. The next day he is early in the saddle and again away to other fields; and so, day after day, week after week, year after year, for nearly half a century; for with him ministerial zeal was not a paroxysm, but a divine fire which kept his whole life incandescent until he dropped at last in the pulpit, consumed by it, or rather borne by it away, as if ascending, like the Hebrew prophet, in a chariot of fire. Neither Wesley nor Whitefield labored as energetically as this obscure man. He exceeded them in the extent of his annual travels, the frequency of his sermons, and the hardships of his daily life. His temperament was less buoyant than theirs, he was often depressed by a constitutional sadness, if not melancholy; but he had an iron will, a profound conscience, an ineffable sense of the value of the human soul, and an

invincible resolution to attain the maximum availability of his life for the eternal welfare of himself and his fellow-men. He studied hard on his long routes, and, by his unaided endeavors, became able to read the holy Scriptures in the original Hebrew and Greek, and was familiar with ecclesiastical and general history and scientific theology. In practical prudence, the wisdom which is profitable to direct in the government of large bodies of men, he perfected himself beyond almost any modern example, as the great results of his administration prove. But as yet he had no distinct perception of the administrative responsibility which was pending over him. The duty of the hour was all he knew of, if not all he cared for, assured that if that were well done the future would unfold itself aright.

He visited Annapolis often about this time, preaching in an old theater. One of the earliest Methodists there was a Mr. Wilkins, who became his steadfast friend, and whose family afterward was among the most influential in the denomination in Baltimore. The Guest family was also important in the early history of Methodism in Annapolis, and their name has been honorably represented in the itinerant ministry. The war spirit menaced Asbury in this region, and his friends could not protect him. His chaise was shot through but he escaped unharmed. It became necessary, however, for him to think of means of safety. A pause is reported in his career of two or more years, during which he is usually represented as sequestered from the storms of the Revolution; but though it seemed to him such, it was but a partial retirement, for he still had a whole state for his parish most of the time. While pursuing his zealous course on the Baltimore Circuit, he received word of the return of Rankin to England; Shadford, to whom he clung as David to

Jonathan, was persuaded to tarry, but he also soon departed; at last all Wesley's English missionaries but himself had left the country or the denomination. He bowed his head in profound dejection, but his will could not be bowed. He was offered a quiet settlement over an Episcopal Church, but he replied, "I will do nothing that shall separate me from my brethren. I hope to live and die a Methodist." "We have great commotion on every side, but in the midst of war the Lord keeps my soul in perfect peace." Shadford, still lingering, meets him, and informs him of the departure of Rankin and Rodda. "So," he writes in sadness, "we are left alone; but I leave myself in the hands of God." He goes forward on his circuit, dragging Shadford with him far on his route; though a heavy gloominess hangs on his mind he inspirits his timid brethren, proclaiming as his text, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Shadford "exhorts" after him, and "the hearts of the people melt under the power of the word." Wherever they go record is now made of "the merciful hand of God displayed" in the assemblies, of "a moving in the congregations," of "powerful seasons," of "extraordinary visitations of grace." "We have been greatly blessed," he adds, "and have seen great displays of divine grace since we have been together, and have been made a blessing to one another."

At last Shadford gives up and retreats. "George Shadford left me," writes the solitary missionary; "I am easy, however, for the Lord is with me. If he will be with me, and bring me to my Father's house in peace, he shall be my God forever. Yea; let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight—only let him not take his Holy Spirit from me—and he shall be mine, and I will

be his, in time and through eternity." Soon afterward he again writes, "I am under some heaviness of mind. But it is no wonder: three thousand miles from home—my friends have left me—I am considered by some as an enemy of the country—every day liable to be seized by violence and abused. All this is but a trifle to suffer for Christ and the salvation of souls. Lord, stand by me!" He still pursues his work, though daily expecting to be arrested, for he hears from various directions of the mobbing and imprisonment of his itinerant brethren; though none but native preachers now remain with him. As Methodists they are held responsible for Wesley's opposition to the Revolution, the modification of his opinion being yet unknown in the colonies; and the mob and petty magistrates, swayed by political excitement and many of them by sectarian jealousy, listen to no remonstrances or entreaties. The test-oaths require a pledge to take up arms, if called upon to do so by the authorities. Asbury, though well affected toward the colonial cause, cannot consent to such a contingency. His conscience as a preacher of the Gospel forbids him. The peril at last comes nearer home to him. In March, 1778, he writes, in concealment, at the house of his friend, Judge White, of Kent County, Del., "I intend to abide here for a season till the storm is abated. The grace of God is a sufficient support while I bear the reproach of men, and am rewarded evil for all the good which I have done, and desire to do for mankind. I am strongly persuaded that divine Providence will bring about a change before long."

On the 2d of April the light horse patrol came to the house, and seizing Judge White, bore him off, leaving his wife and children with Asbury in great alarm. They observed together the next day as an occasion of fasting

and prayer. On Saturday, April 4, Asbury says: "This was a day of much divine power and love to my soul. I was left alone, and spent part of every hour in prayer; and Christ was near and very precious." "On Monday, 6th, I found freedom to move. I rode on through a lonesome, devious road, like Abraham, not knowing whither I went; but weary and unwell, I found a shelter late at night, and there I intended to rest till Providence should direct my way. This was something like the faithful saints of old times, mentioned Heb. xi: 'They wandered about, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered in deserts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth;' though it must be acknowledged their trials far exceeded. Tuesday, 7. My soul was kept in peace, and I spent much of my time in reading the Bible and the Greek Testament. Surely God will stand by and deliver me! I have none other on whom I can depend. And he knows with what intention and for what purposes I came into this distant and strange land, and what little I have suffered for his cause. At night a report was spread which inclined me to think it would be most prudent for me to move the next day. Accordingly I set out after dinner, and lay in a swamp till about sunset; but was then kindly taken in by a friend. My soul has been greatly humbled and blessed under these difficulties, and I thought myself like some of the old prophets who were concealed in times of public distress. Thursday, 9. I promised God that if he would lift me up I would be wholly his, and spend as much time in returning thanks as I have in seeking his protection, which has been some part of every hour. My soul has been much comforted in reading Alleine's Letters, which he wrote in prison. I felt strong confidence in God that he would deliver me; being conscious that I sought nei

ther riches nor honor, and that what I suffered was for the sake of his spiritual Church, and the salvation of my fellow-men. I was informed that Brother Hartley was apprehended last Lord's day in Queen Anne. May the Lord strengthen and support him while he suffers for righteousness' sake! He shall be faithfully remembered by me in my addresses to the throne of grace. This evening I was called upon to visit a person in distress of mind, and the Lord gave him rest for his soul. Perhaps Providence cast my lot in this place for the assistance of this man. Friday, 10. My heart was kept pure, and panting after God, though I was in some sense a prisoner, and under the necessity of being concealed. O my Lord, guide thy poor pilgrim through the rugged ways of this ungodly and dangerous world! My practice is to keep close to God in prayer, and spend a part of every hour, when awake, in that exercise. My exercises are very deep and various. The Lord makes great discoveries of my defects and short-comings in many points. He melts my heart into humility and tenderness; he graciously draws me nearer and nearer to himself, and fills me with the spirit of holy love."

After about a month's concealment among these strangers, he ventured back to Judge White's mansion. The judge, having been seized on the absurd charge of being a Methodist, was acquitted, after five weeks' detention, and allowed to return to his home. A cotemporary authority, a witness of many of these sufferings of the Methodist itinerants, gives us a somewhat minute account of Asbury's present circumstances. "After having traveled and preached at large with all the zeal, fidelity, and caution which prudence could dictate, he, being much suspected as an Englishman, had at length to retire, in a great measure, for a season, until the indignation was

overpast. The spirit of the times was such that he could not safely continue to travel openly. In the year 1778, when the storm was at its highest, and persecution raged furiously, he advisedly confined himself chiefly to the little state of Delaware, where the laws were rather more favorable, and the rulers and influential men were somewhat more friendly. For a time he had even there to keep himself much retired. He found an asylum in the house of his fast and firm friend, Thomas White, Esq., one of the judges of the court in Kent County. He was a pious man, and his wife one of the holiest of women. They were great friends to the cause of religion, and to the preachers generally. From this place of retreat he could correspond with his suffering brethren who were scattered abroad. He could also occasionally travel about, visiting the Societies, and sometimes preach to the people. He was accessible to all the preachers and his friends who came to see him; so that by means of correspondence and visits they could communicate with one another for mutual counsel, comfort, and encouragement. In some of their movements they had to be very cautious; for they were watched as the partridge is watched by the hawk on the mountain. However, his manner of life was such as to procure him many friends, among whom were some of the most respectable characters in the state, and eventually he gained the good-will and confidence of the public generally, and of the principal officers of the state. Among those whose particular confidence he secured we might mention, with Judge White, the pious Judge Barrett, both of whom opened their houses for the brethren as homes, and protected the preachers, and exerted their influence in support of religion. Each of them was instrumental in having a preaching house built in his respective neighborhood, which to

this day are called White's Meeting-house and Barrett's Chapel. We may also mention the late Richard Bassett, Esq., well known as a distinguished character, not only in the state, but in the United States. At different times he filled high and honorable stations. He was a lawyer of note, a legislator, judge, and a governor of Delaware. He was also a member of the convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, a senator in the first Congress, and a judge of the United States Court for the circuit comprising the Districts of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware. Their friendship and confidential intercourse was intimate and uninterrupted till death, the one surviving the other but a few months. I mention these names, and many others might be mentioned, if time would permit, as a tribute of respect due to their memory, in order to give an idea how the Lord providentially favored Asbury and his brethren in raising up friends to open the way before them, that his word might go forth as a lamp that burneth. Their friendship and patronage not only extended to him, but to his suffering brethren generally; to the persecuted Societies, and to the weeping cause of religion. Under their fostering protection bleeding Zion smiled in the midst of tears. This was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes. They found Asbury to be a safe and a good citizen, a circumspect and a pious Christian, and a faithful minister of the Gospel, worthy of confidence as a friend to the country of his choice, of which he had voluntarily and providentially become a citizen. They also found him associated with others who were plain, honest, upright men, inculcating religion, reforming and improving the morals of the people. The Governor of Delaware, though I believe not a professor of religion, being influenced by good-will and friendship toward Asbury and

his brethren, wrote to the Governor of Maryland in behalf of some of the suffering preachers in that state, in consequence of which they were released from recognizances or from prison."[3]

One cause of the improved treatment of Asbury and his brethren is supposed to have been the fact that about 1779 "a letter which he wrote to Rankin in 1777, in which he gave it as his opinion that the Americans would become a free and independent nation, that he was too much knit in affection to many of them to leave them, and that Methodist preachers had a great work to do under God, in this country, had fallen into the hands of the American officers, and had produced a great change in their opinions and feelings toward him."[4]

Asbury's retirement, so called, was a period of no little labor. He was closely confined only about five weeks, and there were but eleven in which he did not travel more or less.[5] Through the first year he ventured not far from home; but, besides preaching occasionally, he frequently held meetings for prayer and exhortation among his friendly neighbors. The preachers often met him in the hospitable family of Judge White, and he privately held with them there a Conference in 1779. He was restless, however, under his present restrictions. His energetic temperament could not brook confinement. Men constituted or endowed for great destinies have an instinctive, though it be a vague, consciousness of their high calling, and are urged forward by instinctive impulses to fulfill it. "My spiritual trials," he writes, "have been heavier and more grievous of late than I have ever experienced before in all the course of my pilgrimage. They seem to indicate to me that I shall lose my soul, or

[3] Ezekiel Cooper on Asbury, p. 90.
[4] Lednum. p. 226. [5] Ibid, p. 211.

lose my life, or live for some peculiar usefulness in the Church of Christ." The latter was the true presentiment. It was his steadfastness to American Methodism, during these trying times when all other foreign laborers deserted it, that, next to his commanding abilities, won for him the admiration and love of his brethren, and led them, when the storm had passed, to exalt him to the leadership of their cause. He did not anticipate his coming elevation, but he saw clearly that great times were approaching—that, as he wrote, "the independence of America by a treaty of peace would be a singular blessing, especially as it would give the Gospel a free course through the land," and he knew that if his life were spared he should share largely in this enlarged spread of the kingdom of Christ. He gradually ventured to preach more openly; and during the second year of what he considered his confinement, the whole state of Delaware was his Circuit; the Conference which had furtively met at Judge White's house having appointed him to it and designated the appointment in the Minutes. The mansion of his friend was his head-quarters; it was not expedient for him to be absent for a long time from it; it was usually his shelter by night, but his ministerial excursions were made almost daily.

The family which thus gave refuge to him and to not a few of his brethren during this stormy period was notable in the early days of Methodism. Like that of Gough, at Perry Hall, of Bassett, at Bohemia Manor, and of Barratt, at "Barratt's Chapel," Kent, its name continually recurs in the Journals of Asbury, Coke, Garrettson, Abbott, and in other early Methodist publications. Leaving Asbury in his comfortable asylum, we may appropriately digress, a moment, to notice some of these memorable historical families, who, though associated

with the highest social circles of their times, counted not their opulence nor their lives dear unto them, choosing rather to suffer persecution with the people of God.

Thomas White, "Chief Judge of the Common Pleas," had been an unexceptionable member of the English Church before he met with the Methodists. His wife was a lady of special excellence; devoted, charitable, strict in the religious education of her family, not omitting her numerous colored servants, to whom she carefully taught the Holy Scriptures. Hearing the Methodists preach, her devout heart recognized them as congenial Christians, and she reported them so favorably to her husband that he was induced to accompany her and their children to one of their appointments. The preachers were invited to his mansion, and it remained a "preaching place" till the erection of White's Chapel. His wife, Mary White, not only led him to the Methodist communion, but became his best guide to heaven. She was the priestess of the family, a woman of rare talents, of remarkable but modest courage, and of fervent zeal. When he was seized by the military patrol she clung to him, defending him, and declaring to the ruffians, who brandished their swords over her, that she feared them not, until, overpowered by their numbers, he was borne away. She soon followed them, found out the place of his confinement, and rested not till she effected his restoration to his family. "On another sorrowful occasion," says a Methodist annalist, "when a drafted company of soldiers came by her house and halted, while the men were weeping on account of leaving their parents, wives, and sisters, and while wives and sisters were clinging to their husbands and brothers, telling by their gushing tears how deeply they felt as they were parting with them, fearing they should see them no more, Mrs. White

kneeled down on the ground before them and offered up fervent prayers, mingling her tears with theirs for their temporal and eternal salvation; and when the Methodists were met for worship, if there were none present more suitable, she took up the cross, led the religious exercises, and met the class—and she would have gone further and preached if Asbury had encouraged her. That child of nature and of grace, Benjamin Abbott, was at Mr. White's in October, 1782; when about to start for Quarterly Meeting at Barrett's Chapel, he says, 'Mrs. White came to me as I sat on my horse, and took hold of my hand, exhorting me for some time. I felt very happy under her wholesome admonitions.' Thomas Ware says: 'She was a mother in Israel in very deed.' When her husband informed her that his end was nigh, she spent the last night in supplications for him, and with him exulted in victory as he entered into the joy of his Lord. She, like her husband, professed and exemplified the grace of perfect love. They were lovely in their lives, and in death were not long divided; she soon followed him to the 'better country.' Near by the old homestead the bricks that arched their graves, now sunk in the earth, mark the spot where their heaven-watched dust reposes, till they shall again appear in the bloom and beauty of immortality."[6]

[6] Lednum, p. 259. Lednum visited the place in 1848. He found there an old negress who had been a servant of Judge White, who was then in her eighty-eighth year. "Soon the little African woman, led by a girl—for she was almost blind—came. She could point to the spot where the house stood where the preachers were secreted, though the house, as well as the wood that stood between it and the dwelling-house, has long since disappeared. She distinctly remembered all the old preachers that visited her old master, and could describe them. The old hip-roofed two-story house in which Judge White lived is still standing, and has much of the original material in it after the lapse of a hundred years. The floors on which the beds were spread, to accommodate the Methodists attending Quarterly Meetings,

"In moral worth," says the same authority, "Judge White had no superior in his day—his house and hands were always open to relieve the needy—he was the friend of the poor and oppressed, and left no one in bondage whom he could make free. For many years he lived in the enjoyment of perfect love. Just before he died he showed his son Samuel his books, and gave him directions concerning the brick house that he was building as an addition to his old house. Then, coming to his wife, he said, "I feel as I never felt before," and gave directions concerning his burial. He died in the spring of 1795, in his sixty-fifth year. When Asbury heard of his death, he wrote, "The news was an awful shock to me; I have met with nothing like it in the death of any friend on the continent. I have lived days, weeks, and months in his house. He was among my very best friends."

Richard Bassett, of Dover, Delaware, was a man of pre-eminence in the civil and social life of these times. He first met Asbury in his concealment at Judge White's residence. On a professional journey to Maryland, he called there to spend a night with his friend, the Judge. As a door in the house was opened he observed Asbury, with some other Preachers, apparently retired in quiet conversation, and inquired of Mrs. White who "they were, dressed in sable garments and keeping themselves aside?" "They are some of the best men in the world; they are Methodist Preachers," replied the

and the preachers when assembled for Conference, on which they read their Bibles on their knees and offered up their fervent prayers, are still there. While sitting in this house, which sheltered the first race of Methodist preachers, I felt as if it were relatively holy, having been sanctified by the presence and prayers of Asbury, Shadford, Watters, Garrettson, Pedicord, Coke, Whatcoat, and many others. When I lay down on the bed to pass the night, I was less inclined to sleep than to call up the scenes that had transpired seventy years before. My soul was full of other times!"

hostess. He was evidently disturbed by this intelligence, and observed, "Then I cannot stay here to-night." "You must stay; they cannot hurt you," rejoined the lady. Supper being ready, they all sat down at the table. Asbury had considerable conversation with Bassett, by which he was convinced that Methodist Preachers were not so ignorant or unsociable as to make them outcasts from civil society. On taking leave, he invited Asbury, more from custom than desire, to call on him in case he visited Dover. When Bassett returned home and informed his wife that he had been in company with Methodist Preachers, and had invited one of them to his house, she was greatly troubled; but was quieted when he told her, "It is not likely that he will come." But some time later, Bassett, while looking out of his window, saw the itinerant approaching. That evening Asbury charmed by his conversation a large circle at the tea-table, till late into the night; and for nearly two-score years Richard Bassett was his unfailing friend.

Bassett was a man of bravery and generosity. Not long after White had joined the Methodists he visited his friend at Dover, and spent a night with him. All Methodists were then denounced as Tories, and the rabble, hearing of White's presence, approached Bassett's house to seize him. Bassett was a militia officer, and, with drawn sword, defied them at his door. "He is no more a Tory than you are," he shouted; "you shall have him only by passing over my dead body." He compelled them to fall back and leave the premises. Bassett's chivalric character and high standing were not to be trifled with, and his friend remained unmolested.

Subsequently Asbury, on visiting the family, describes Bassett as "a very conversant and affectionate man, who, from his own acknowledgments, appears to be sick of

sin. His wife is under great distress—she prays much." It was not long before she was rejoicing in the consolation of the Gospel, and her husband followed in her steps. They became zealous and exemplary Methodists. He "lived a bright example of holiness, and left the world praising God." He often preached, and was the chief founder of "Wesley Chapel," in Dover. "Estimating him," says a Methodist historian, "according to his standing, influence, and usefulness in the community, he was as important a member as has belonged to the Methodist Episcopal Church." He had three residences, one in Dover, one in Wilmington, and another at Bohemia Manor, a famous locality in the early Methodist annals. All of them were favorite homes of the Methodist itinerants, and scenes of early Quarterly Conferences and other extraordinary meetings. Bohemia Manor consisted of 18,000 acres on the Bohemia and Elk Rivers. Bassett owned 6,000 of the best of these acres. He had a famous "old log Bethesda Chapel" on the Manor, in which the greatest heroes of primitive Methodism sounded their trumpets. His mansion there was as noted a resort of Methodist Preachers as Perry Hall on the Western Shore of Maryland; "it was seldom without some one of them, and often had a number of them together." The generous lawyer received one of them, broken down with age and labor, as superintendent of his household. His groves sometimes resounded with the melodies of Methodist camp-meetings. The Manor became "famous for Methodism; in almost every family Methodists were found. Wherever Mr. Bassett's influence extended, he did not suffer a drop of distilled liquor to be used. His house and table were very plain; while he was doing all in his power for the cause of God."[1]

[1] Lednum, p. 275.

His high character secured the respect of his fellow-citizens. They sent him as their delegate to the Convention which framed the Constitution of the United States, and as their Senator in Congress, and elected him Governor of their state. Asbury, seeing him at last smitten with paralysis, called him his "long-loved friend," and in a few months followed him to heaven. He died in the faith in 1815,[8] and his funeral, at the Manor, was attended by a great concourse of Methodists and other citizens. Henry Boehm, the traveling companion of Asbury, presided over the religious services of the occasion; Ezekiel Cooper preached his funeral sermon.

The "pious Judge Barratt" has already been mentioned, on the authority of a cotemporary writer, as one of the friends of Asbury, who protected him and other suffering itinerants in the troubled times of the Revolution. His name frequently appears in the Journals of Asbury, but always in brief though often significant allusions. "Barratt's Chapel" is famous in our early annals, and still remains, a monument of its founder. "It is forty-two feet by forty-eight," says our best chronicler of these early times, "built of bricks, two stories high, and had a vestry room connected with it. It was then, and for a number of years after, far the grandest country chapel that the Methodists had in America. It was not, however, finished till two generations passed away. In November of the year 1780 the first Quarterly Meeting was held in it. It was supposed that there were a thousand people in attendance. Dr. M'Gaw, Asbury, Hartley, Pedicord, and Cromwell were there to officiate. Barratt's Chapel is memorable as being the place where

[8] Lednum, chap. 42. His only daughter became the wife of Hon James Bayard, one of the Commissioners of the United States who negotiated the Treaty of Ghent.

Dr. Coke and Mr. Asbury had their first interview, and where the preliminaries of forming the Methodists into a Church began in this country—the seat on which they sat in the pulpit on that occasion is still preserved in the same place as a memento."[9]

Some time after the decease of its founder, Asbury paused there, with no little emotion, in his rapid course over the country. "I preached," he writes, "at Barratt's Chapel, and baptized some children. I had powerful feelings of sympathy for the children and grandchildren of that holy man in life and death, Philip Barratt. My dear friends, Governor Bassett and his lady, came nearly forty miles to meet me." When, in extreme age, shortly before his death, the veteran Bishop passed over the same region, for the last time, he ascended the old pulpit and preached once more amid its hallowed memories, though "in great feebleness of body." The son of his ancient friend was there to welcome him to dinner "Ah!" exclaimed the young man, "I knew that my father and mother thought more of him than of any other man on earth; and well does it become their son to respect him." The patriarch took a pensive pleasure in his old age in recalling such recollections; touching allusions to early scenes and early friends continually occur in his diary.

Such were some of the influential supporters of Asbury in his persecutions when the Revolutionary storm swept over the country. They protected him, and, at last, secured his liberty to travel and preach. He seems to have had peculiar success in gathering about the Methodist standard, in these days of its humiliation, devout families of the higher classes. In most of the middle provinces there were now examples of wealth and social influence

[9] Lednum, p. 265. Lednum gives an engraving of the chapel.

consecrated to the struggling cause; opulent mansions, opened, with pious welcome, to the travel-worn itinerants, and made not only asylums for them, but sanctuaries of worship for their humble people. Asbury's personal character commanded the respect and the admiration of such families. While they could not but wonder at his devotion to the lowliest labors of the ministry, his itinerant heroism, they saw in him intrinsic greatness of soul, and an intelligence, an amenity, and a dignity, which extorted the veneration of the cultivated circles that gathered under their roofs, however slight may have been the sympathy of the company with his peculiar religious opinions and labors. Immediately on his introduction into any intelligent circle was visibly felt that deferential impression of his presence which a cotemporary, heretofore cited, speaks of as invariable and irresistible. It is probable that no man of his time, except Washington, was regarded in the United States with more reverential respect, not to say diffidence, than Francis Asbury.

It was in the period of his retirement that he won the friendship of Rev. Dr. M'Gaw—a consolation to him through the remainder of his life. "Both Asbury and Garrettson speak in the highest terms of the good service the doctor rendered them and the cause of Methodism. Through M'Gaw's friendship, some of the preachers gained access to a number of families in Dover, Del., that became Methodists. Soon after, the doctor became Rector of St. Paul's Church in Philadelphia. The first Sabbath that Dr. Coke spent in America he preached once for Dr. M'Gaw at St. Paul's, and once at St. George's. When Bishop Coke and Bishop Asbury preached in that city the doctor was generally one of their hearers." In 1779 a chapel was erected and opened for worship by Dr. M'Gaw at Dover. It was called the "Forrest

Chapel," and was the first meeting-house that the Methodists had in the state. It was afterward called "Thomas's Chapel."[10]

The earliest Methodist historian describes the times immediately preceding Asbury's retirement as generally threatening to the new denomination. "The preachers," he says, "found great difficulties in keeping their stations; and some were forced to be given up, so that some of the classes were entirely broken up. It might be well said that 'without were fightings, within were fears.' War and the shedding of blood were heard of in all directions; armies marching back and forth one after another; and in many places the people were in great confusion, so that religion was almost banished from some neighborhoods where it had been lively. Some of our Societies in the North suffered more than we did in the south part of Virginia. But the Lord took care of his own work."[11]

Protected by his influential friends, Asbury was at last enabled to emerge out of his comparative obscurity in Delaware, after spending there two years and one month. He came forth to be the hero of American Methodist history through all the remainder of his life. He had been found faithful when all his British associates had retreated from the stormy arena. The native preachers now not only revered, but loved him. Some of them had penetrated to his retreat, as we have seen, and held an informal Conference in the house of Judge White; they there declared him their "general assistant" or superintendent, as Rankin had abdicated that office by leaving the country. And now began those incredible tours over the continent, averaging two a year, for the remainder of his life, which, with his daily preaching in

[10] Lednum, pp. 233, 234. [11] Lee, p. 62.

chapels, court-houses, barns, private houses, or the open air, present perhaps the most extraordinary example of ministerial labor in the history of the Church, ancient or modern. His meager Journals give us few details; the biographer or historian is at a loss to sketch his courses from the slight jottings of the record; the reader is bewildered with the rapidity of his movements; but through them all the tireless, the invincible, the gigantic apostle appears, planning grandly and as grandly executing his plans; raising up hosts of preachers; forming new Churches, new Circuits, and new Conferences; extending his denomination north, south, east, west, till it becomes, before his death, coextensive with the nation, and foremost, in energy and success, of all American religions communions.

He hastened southward and averted a schism likely to have been occasioned by the clamorous demand of people and preachers for the sacraments. He journeyed to and fro in Virginia and North Carolina. He found it necessary to use two horses on this difficult route. "We set out," he says in one instance, "for Crump's, over rocks, hills, creeks, and pathless woods. The young man with me was heartless before we had traveled a mile; but when he saw how I could bush it, and sometimes force my way through a thicket and make the young saplings bend before me, and twist and turn out of the way or path, for there was no road, he took courage. With great difficulty we came into the settlement about two o'clock, after traveling eight or nine hours, the people looking almost as wild as the deer in the woods. I have only time to pray and write in my Journal; always upon the wing; as the rides are so long and the roads so bad, it takes me many hours, for in general I walk my horse. I crossed Rocky River about ten miles from Haw River. It was rocky,

sure enough. I can see little else but cabins in these parts built with poles. I crossed Deep River in a ferryboat, and the poor ferryman swore because I had not a shilling to give him." Such were common examples of his ministerial itinerancy. And amid these scenes he writes, "I was never more devoted to God—it makes me think I am in my duty. I was tempted and tried in Delaware to prepare me for, and drive me to, this work; and believe if I had not started I should have suffered great loss in my soul. I admire the hand of God in disposing of me, and wonder and own his providence."

He returns northward through Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, meeting his fellow-laborers in Quarterly and Annual Conferences, and inspiriting the Churches. He rejoices to greet Jarratt again, but still more to find, all along his route, zealous native preachers rising up to extend the Church. He sees Abbott for the first time, and says "his word comes with great power; the people fall to the ground under it, and sink into a passive state, helpless, motionless; he is a man of uncommon zeal, and (although his language has somewhat of incorrectness) of good utterance." He learns as he presses onward that "there is daily a great turning to God in new places, and that the work of sanctification goes on in our old Societies." In about ten months he traveled about four thousand miles, over the worst roads, and preached upon an average a sermon a day.

In May, 1781, he hastens southward again, and is soon penetrating the wilderness. By the first week in June he approaches the south branch of the Potomac, and writes: "I am kept in peace, and greatly pleased I am to get into the woods, where, although alone, I have blessed company, and sometimes think, Who so happy as

myself?" After swimming his horse "over the Great Capon River, fatigued and weary, he found rest in the cabin of a friendly settler. His resting-place was on the top of a chest, and his clothes his only covering. This, however, was better fare than he often had. Frequently, when benighted in the wilderness, he has slept on the ground, or on rocks, or on boards in a deserted cabin, with nothing to eat. Being unable to cross the South Branch, he was obliged, as the explorers express it, to strike for the mountains. On the summit of one of these ranges he found a congregation as wild as the wilderness around them. Here he remained over Sabbath, and the mountain settlers were summoned far and near to listen to the word. When the hour for preaching came about two hundred persons were collected, and the voice of prayer and praise waked the echoes of the mountain. From hence he went to another appointment, where he had three hundred hearers. Crossing the South Branch he entered a settlement of Germans, and as he could not preach in that language he expressed a wish that the Methodist Church had German preachers, for he could see by the spirit of the people that a great work might be wrought among them. What Asbury sighed for has since been fully realized. Anon we find him in the valley; above and around him rose up in their grandeur the Alleghanies, furnishing themes of thought for the loftiest contemplation, and inspiring a mind like his with profound emotions of reverence and love for the hand that had reared them and covered their summits with living verdure. In crossing the Fork Mountain he found another German settlement, and was much comforted in spirit in striving to preach to them. Some nights afterward we find him on the banks of Lost River, sympathizing with and praying for the men who had been

drafted for the army. Again we find him benighted in the mountains, sleeping among the rocks, with nothing for his covering but the vaulted sky. Thus on he traveled until he reached Leesburg, where he held a quarterly meeting, and thence he pursued his way, preaching from place to place, through Maryland and Pennsylvania."[12]

He continued during the ensuing three years to fly like the apocalyptic angel, "having the everlasting Gospel to preach" over all the central parts of the continent, from New York to North Carolina. "The Lord," he writes, "is my witness that if my whole body, yea, every hair of my head, could labor and suffer, they should be freely given up for God and souls." In November, 1784, weary and worn by travel and preaching, he arrived, on Sunday, during public worship, at his friend Barratt's Chapel. A man of small stature, ruddy complexion, brilliant eyes, long hair, feminine but musical voice, and gowned as an English clergyman, was officiating. Asbury ascended the pulpit and embraced and kissed him before the whole assembly, for the itinerant recognized him as another messenger from Wesley come to his relief after the desertion of all his English associates, a man who, though of dwarfish body, had an immeasurable soul, and had become a chieftain of Methodism in England, Ireland, and Wales, only second to Wesley himself. Asbury knew not yet the full import of his mission; but after his labors and sufferings, as Wesley's solitary representative in America, any such visitor was to him like an angel from heaven, and he knew the man too well to doubt that his presence in the new world would make an era in its struggling Methodism. This little man, of gigantic soul, whom Asbury, mourning his death years afterward, was to characterize as "the great-

[12] Strickland's Asbury, chap. 6.

est man of the last century in Christian labors," not excepting Whitefield or Wesley, represented, in the humble pulpit of Barratt's Chapel, the most momentous revolution in American Methodism. He was the "Rev. Thomas Coke, LL.D., late of Jesus College, Oxford," but now the first Protestant bishop of the western hemisphere.[13] Great events were at hand; but before introducing the stranger more fully upon the scene, it is expedient that we cast our glance repeatedly back again over our present period, for other and extraordinary men were abroad, laying deeply and widely the foundations of the coming reconstruction; men, some of whose once humble names become more and more illustriously historical as the results of their self-sacrificing labors still develop in the progress of the denomination.

[13] Asbury's consecration to the episcopate was the first Protestant ordination of the kind *in* the new world, but Coke's was the first *for* it.

CHAPTER III.

LABORS AND TRIALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Rankin itinerating — At Perry Hall — Joins Shadford in Virginia — The "Great Revival" there — Jarratt — Rankin returns to England — His Death — His Administration in America — His Treatment of Asbury — Martin Rodda — He intermeddles with Politics — Clowe's Rising and Execution — Persecution of the Methodists — Shadford — His last Interview with Asbury — His Trials — His Return to England — Further Traces of his Life — His Death.

RANKIN continued in the colonies till the spring of 1778. After the Conference of 1775 we can trace him through New Jersey, thence into Pennsylvania, thence to Delaware and Maryland; he preached zealously, but fretted continually under "the alarm upon alarm" from New England. In July he was at Gunpowder Falls, Maryland, where he preached to a large assembly in observance of the Fast Day appointed by Congress. "I endeavored," he says, "to open up the cause of all our misery. I told them that the sins of Great Britain and her colonies had long called aloud for vengeance, and in a peculiar sense the dreadful sin of buying and selling the souls and bodies of the poor Africans. I felt but poorly when I began, but the Lord was my strength, and enabled me to speak with power." He hastened on to Perry Hall. "I spent," he writes, "a most agreeable evening with Mr. and Mrs. Gough, and the rest of the family. A numerous family of the servants were called in to prayer and exhortation; so that, with them and the rest of the house, we had a little congregation. The

Lord was in the midst, and we praised him with joyful lips. The simplicity of spirit discovered by Mr. and Mrs. Gough was truly pleasing. At every opportunity he was declaring what the Lord had done for his soul; still wondering at the matchless love of Jesus, who had plucked him as a brand from the burning."

In the next spring we find him in Virginia, rejoicing in the "Great Revival," which still prevailed there through several of its counties. Arriving at Leesburgh, he says, "I called at Mr. Fairfax's, (a relation of old Lord Fairfax,) a gentleman of large estate, and who of late has been savingly brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was over at Baltimore, at our little Conference; and, at the love-feast that followed, he spoke of what God had done for his soul, with such simplicity and unction from on high as greatly affected every one who heard him. May he live to be an ornament to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus!" On the last day of the month Shadford, flaming with the prevalent religious excitement, came upon his path, and they rejoiced together. "His coming strengthened my hands," writes Rankin; for the latter was worn out with illness, labors, and anxieties about the war. "I preached," he continues, "at the chapel, a little way from Burshaw's. I felt poorly, both in body and mind, but the Lord stood by me and enabled me to speak with a degree of power and divine pungency. Afterward we met the Society, and found the presence of the Lord with us. After dinner I observed to Mr. Shadford that I feared I should not have strength to preach in the afternoon; a little rest, however, refreshed me, and at four o'clock I went to the chapel again and preached from Rev. iii, 8. Toward the close of the sermon I had an uncommon struggle in my breast, and, in the twinkling of an eye, my soul was so

filled with the power and love of God, that I could scarce get out my words. I had hardly spoken two sentences while under this amazing influence before the very house seemed to shake, and all the people were overcome with the presence of the Lord God of Israel. Such a scene my eyes saw and ears heard as I never was witness to before. Through the mercy and goodness of God I had seen many glorious displays of the arm of the Lord in different parts of his vineyard, but such a time as this I never, never beheld. Numbers were calling out for mercy, and many were mightily praising God their Saviour; while others were in an agony for full redemption in the blood of Jesus. Soon my voice was drowned amid the sounds of prayer and praise. Husbands were inviting their wives to go to heaven with them, and parents calling upon their children to come to the Lord Jesus; and what was peculiarly affecting, I observed in the gallery appropriated for the black people almost the whole of them upon their knees; some for themselves, and others for their distressed companions. In short, look where we would, all was wonder and amazement. As my strength was almost gone, I desired Mr. Shadford to speak a few words to them. He attempted so to do, but was so overcome with the divine presence that he was obliged to sit down; and this was the case, both with him and myself, over and over again. We could only sit still and let the Lord do his own work. For upward of two hours the mighty outpouring of the Spirit of God continued upon the congregation. Such a day of the Son of man my eyes never beheld before. From the best accounts, upward of fifty persons were awakened and brought to a knowledge of God that day; besides many who were enabled to witness that the blood of Jesus cleansed them from all sin."

It seems that he lingered among the scenes of the Virginia revival about two months, witnessing the triumphs of the Gospel on every hand. On July 2, he and Shadford rode to Jarratt's home and were "received with open arms." "I preached," he writes, "the next day, not far from his house, to a deeply attentive congregation. Many were much affected at the preaching, but far more at the meeting of the Society. Mr. Jarratt himself was constrained to praise God aloud for his great love to him and to his people. Sunday, 7. I preached at W.'s chapel, about twenty miles from Mr. Jarratt's. The house was greatly crowded, and four or five hundred stood at the doors and windows, and listened with unabated attention. I preached from Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones: "And there was a great shaking." I was obliged to stop again and again, and beg of the people to compose themselves. But they could not; some on their knees, and some on their faces, were crying mightily to God all the time I was preaching. Hundreds of negroes were among them, with the tears streaming down their faces. The same power we found in meeting the Society, and many were enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable. In the cool of the evening I preached out of doors, and many found an uncommon blessing. Every day the ensuing week I preached to large and attentive congregations. The weather was violently hot, and the fatigue of riding and preaching so often was great. But God made up all this to me by his comfortable presence. On Thursday, 11, I preached to a large congregation at the preaching-house near Mr. Jarratt's. After laboring at several places on Friday and Saturday, on Sunday, 14, I came to Mr. B.'s, where I preached and met the Society. The congregation was, as before, abundantly larger than the chapel could contain; and we had almost such

a day as fourteen days ago, only attended with a more deep and solemn work. What a work is God working in this corner of Mr. Jarratt's parish! It seemed as if all the country for nine or ten miles around were ready to turn to God. In the evening I rode to Mr. S.'s, and found a whole family fearing and loving God. Mr. S., a sensible and judicious man, had been for many years a Justice of the Peace. He observed, 'How amazing the change was which had been lately wrought in the place where he lived! That, before the Methodists came into these parts, when he was called by his office to attend the court, there was nothing but drunkenness, cursing, swearing, and fighting, most of the time the court sat; whereas now nothing is heard but prayer and praise, and conversing about God and the things of God.' Monday, 15. I rode toward North Carolina. In every place the congregations were large, and received the word with all readiness of mind. I know not that I have spent such a week since I came to America. I saw everywhere such a simplicity in the people, with such a vehement thirst after the word of God, that I frequently preached and continued in prayer till I was hardly able to stand. Indeed, there was no getting away from them while I was able to speak one sentence for God. Sunday, 21. I preached at Roanoke Chapel to more than double of what the house would contain. In general, the white people were within the chapel, and the black people without. The windows being all open, every one could hear, and hundreds felt the word of God. Many were bathed in tears, and others rejoicing with joy unspeakable. When the Society met many could not refrain from praising God aloud. I preached to a large company in the afternoon, and concluded the day with prayer and thanksgiving. Tuesday, 23. I crossed the Roanoke

River, and preached at a chapel in North Carolina. And I preached every day to very large and deeply attentive congregations, although not without much labor and pain, through the extreme heat of the weather. On Tuesday, 30, was our Quarterly Meeting. I scarce ever remember such a season. No chapel or preaching-house in Virginia could have contained one third of the congregation. Our friends, knowing this, had contrived to shade with boughs of trees a space that would contain two or three thousand persons. Under this, wholly screened from the rays of the sun, we held our general love-feast. It began between eight and nine on Wednesday morning, and continued till noon. Many testified that they had 'redemption in the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins.' And many were enabled to declare that it had 'cleansed them from all sin.' So clear, so full, so strong was their testimony, that while some were speaking their experience hundreds were in tears, and others vehemently crying to God for pardon or holiness. About eight our watch-night began. Mr. Jarratt preached an excellent sermon; the rest of the Preachers exhorted and prayed with divine energy. Surely, for the work wrought on these two days many will praise God to all eternity."[1]

On the 27th of August he held another Quarterly Meeting, "which," he says, "began as usual with our love-feast and ended with our watch-afternoon. Truly this was a great day of the Son of man, and great was our glorying in God our Saviour. In the love-feast the flame of divine love ran from heart to heart, and many were enabled to declare the great things which the Lord had done for their souls. Early in the morning some of

[1] This extract is not in Rankin's Life, from which my other citations are taken, but is appended to Jarratt's "Narrative," as sent to Wesley by Rankin. See Asbury's Journals, i, 227.

our kind friends came and told me that they were informed a company of the militia with their officers intended to take me and the other preachers up. Some, with tears, would have persuaded me to leave the place for safety. I thanked them, but I added, 'I am come hither by the providence of God; I am sent on an errand of love to souls; thus engaged in my Lord's work I fear nothing, and will abide the consequences be they what they may.' I had retired a little by myself when one and another came to my room door and begged I would not venture out to preach, for the officers and their men were come. I felt no perturbation of mind, but was perfectly calm. I told our friends their business was to pray, and mine to deliver the message of God. Soon after I went to the arbor, which was fitted up for preaching, and there I beheld the soldiers in the skirts of the congregation. After singing I called on all the people to lift up their hearts to God as the heart of one man. They did so indeed. When we arose from our knees most of the congregation were bathed in tears; and I beheld several of the officers and their men wiping their eyes also. I had not spoken ten minutes when a cry went through all the people, and I observed some of the officers, as well as many of the soldiers, trembling as they stood. I concluded my sermon in peace; and the other preachers prayed and exhorted after me, till the conclusion of the service. I was informed afterward by some of our friends that some of the officers said, 'God forbid that we should hurt one hair of the head of such a minister of the Lord Jesus Christ, who has this day so clearly and powerfully shown us the way of salvation.' They departed to their own homes, and we spent the evening in peace and love." This afternoon he records a strong impression upon his mind that there had been an engagement between the

British and American troops. The apprehension was very natural to his morbid fears, and such events were constantly imminent. Two days later an express passed him announcing the battle of Long Island, and that "some thousands of the American troops were cut to pieces." The report was taken as the test whether his presentiment "were of God or not." Of course it only deepened his alarm at the state of the country and his resolution to leave it. He hastened northward, and we hear little more of him till his arrival in London, June, 1778.[2]

The remainder of his life was spent in that city, where he preached two or three times a week, led a Class, and did other services in the Wesleyan Chapels during more than thirty years. He was present at the death-bed of Wesley in City Road parsonage. In 1810 his own health, which had been feeble for years, finally gave way. About a week before his death, Benson, the Wesleyan commentator, visited him, and records that "among many other things he said, 'I long to publish with my latest breath His love and guardian care.' I said, 'I doubt not but you will publish it to the last.' He replied, 'It is what I have prayed for for many years.' He then broke out in praise, 'O glory, glory forever, glory be to God for all his goodness! I have here a comfortable bed to lie on, kind friends about me who love me,

[2] Lednum represents him in New York at the end of 1777. Lee says he "left about the middle of September," 1777; but at this date he only left Maryland. Sprague (Annals, etc., vii, 33,) says "it does not appear when or from what port he sailed." Rankin published two autobiographical narratives; the second is usually cited, and fails to give many important dates; the first (Armin. Mag., ii, 197) says, "The British being in possession of Philadelphia, I left Maryland in September, and through divers dangers got safe into that city in the month of November. I spent the winter there, and left the Capes of Delaware on the 17th of March, 1778, and arrived safe at the Cove of Cork on the 15th of April."

and all the blessings I could have, together with the grace of God and hopes of glory.'" Three days before his death Benson writes, "I found him very much weaker, but perfectly resigned to the will of God, and patiently waiting till his change should come. He desired his daughter-in-law to tell me what had been determined about the services to be performed at his funeral. 'Let my name,' said he, 'be written in the dust; but if anything can be said on the occasion of my death that may benefit the living, let it be done.' 'Is there any particular text,' I asked, 'which you would wish to be spoken from on the occasion?' After pausing a little he said, 'As a general subject I know none more suitable than 1 Peter i, 3, "Blessed," etc.; but let my name be written in the dust.' As he expressed a desire for more consolation, I said, 'I hope you will not reason about that: leave it entirely to the Lord. He has for many years enabled you to show your faith by your works, by living to him in whom you believe; and your state cannot now be affected by your feeling a greater or less measure of consolation. Your whole reliance must be on the word and promise of Him who will never leave those that trust in him. The mercy, truth, and faithfulness of God in Christ must be the ground of your confidence.' We then joined in prayer and were refreshed indeed. He was affected and filled with consolation, and, when I rose from my knees, took me by the hand and said, 'Lo, God is here, let us adore,'" etc.

According to the record he "finished his course with joy on the 17th of May, 1810, after having faithfully served God in his generation."[3] "He was a man," it is added, "truly devoted to God, and in death witnessed a good confession." "Peculiarities he certainly had, which

[3] Jackson's Early Methodist Preachers, iii, 87.

sometimes prevented his being as useful as otherwise he would have been; but they were such as consisted in him with great devotedness to and deep communion with God." These "peculiarities" were the chief impediments to his greater usefulness in America. The records of our early ministry frequently allude to them, but always with the acknowledgment of his entire devotion to God and the Church. His mind was severe, his will unbending, his manners peremptory; he was disposed to exaggerated anxieties, and to fastidious particularities in ecclesiastical business, and in the enforcement of discipline. But perhaps some of these defects were not without advantage to his peculiar work in the colonies. When he arrived here he found that the looseness and irregularity which pervaded the colonial life affected profoundly the young Churches. The peculiar disciplinary customs of Methodism, which had been so salutary in England, were but incidental to the movement here; the itinerancy itself had yet but little method, notwithstanding the previous endeavors of Asbury to establish it; there were many Societies without Classes, and other irregularities prevailed. Rankin, with iron purpose, reduced all to order. His manner of doing so appears to have been the principal cause of offense. His chief fault, however, was that he could not appreciate Asbury; and the services of that great man were trammeled and impaired throughout his administration. Asbury, however, bowed quietly to his authority, and awaited the future. He wrote to Wesley representing his disabilities, but had the magnanimity to read the letter to Rankin before it was sent. Asbury's time came; he showed his superiority, of sense and character, in the trial, that dispersed all his British fellow-laborers; and came, calm and strong, out of that ordeal, recognized

forever as the legitimate leader of American Methodism. Rankin's correspondence with Wesley had actually induced the latter to recall Asbury in 1775. "Let him come home without delay," said Wesley; and a month later he wrote, "I shall hope to see him at the Conference." Providentially Asbury was hundreds of miles away when these letters arrived, and Rankin could not send them to him. Thus was saved to American Methodism the greatest champion its history records. Wesley, soon afterward, had reason to thank God for the failure of his order, and appointed Asbury "general assistant," and at last bishop of the denomination.[4]

Martin Rodda's appointments, during the two or three years of his American ministry, were in Maryland. There are but few allusions to his labors in the cotemporary documents. While on his last circuit (Kent) his zealous loyalty led him to disobey Wesley's prudent advice of neutrality, to circulate the royal proclamation, and to take side with a company of Tories "who had collected together in Delaware."[5] To his imprudence is imputed much of that violent persecution, under which so many of his brethren suffered, in the middle states during most of the Revolutionary War.[6] An apostate Methodist, Chauncey Clowe, formerly of some note in one of the Societies, had formed a company of Royalists, about three hundred strong, who endeavored to fight their way to the British forces. They were dispersed after some bloodshed, and their leaders brought to trial. Clowe was executed. Though disowned by the Methodists, they were generally held responsible for his movements. Wesley's "Address," Rodda's imprudence, and the royal proclivities of the English preachers generally, gave

[4] Dr. Coggeshall's MS. Life of Asbury, v.
[5] Lee, p. 62. [6] Lednum, p. 193.

plausibility to the public suspicions. Governor Rodney, a religiously inclined man, but not a Methodist, endeavored to defend the maligned Church. He ascertained to what Christian denominations Clowe's company belonged; and, finding that but two of them were Methodists, commented on the fact before the court in a manner that made the persecutors cower.[7] But the popular hostility could not be controlled. The excited rabble condemned all Methodist itinerants as Tories, if not as spies. The arrest and abduction of Judge White by the light horse patrol, the necessary seclusion of Asbury, the assaults on and imprisonment of Hartley, Wren, Forrest, Garrettson, and others, followed soon after. Gatch was mobbed and "tarred;" Pedicord was attacked and seriously injured on the highway; Rodda had to fly to the British fleet, and made his way back to England, where, after a brief period of itinerant labors, he appears to have retired from his Methodist brethren.

We have followed Shadford through his successful labors in Virginia, down to his final interview with Asbury. He had been threatened with imprisonment in that state, and, after a year and a half of remarkable usefulness, he left it for the north in the depth of winter. On his route he was lost in the woods at night when the weather was intensely cold, and the snow a foot deep. He could discover no house; without relief he must perish. He fell upon his knees and prayed for deliverance. On rising he stood some time listening, when he heard the distant barking of a dog. Following the sound, he was welcomed at the house of a plantation. Thus saved, he hastened into Maryland; but there also he was required to renounce his loyalty, or be in peril of imprisonment, if not of death. "He could not travel," he says,

[7] Bangs's Life of Garrettson, p. 64.

"without a pass, nor have a pass without taking the oaths." It was now that he had his last interview with Asbury at Judge White's, immediately before the abduction of the latter, and the compulsory seclusion of Asbury. "Let us have a day of fasting and prayer," he said to Asbury, "that the Lord may direct us; for we were never in such circumstances as now since we were Methodist preachers." They did so, and in the evening Shadford inquired what conclusion he had reached. "I do not see my way clear to go to England," responded the steadfast Asbury. Shadford replied, "My work is here done; I cannot stay; it is impressed on my mind that I ought to go home, as strongly as it was at first to come to America." "Then one of us must be under a delusion," rejoined Asbury. "Not so," said Shadford; "I may have a call to go, and you to stay." "I believe," adds Shadford, "we both obeyed the call of Providence. We saw we must part, though we loved as David and Jonathan. And, indeed, these times made us love one another in a peculiar manner. O how glad were we to meet and pour our griefs into each other's bosom!" He obtained from the military authorities a pass for his route northward, and set out. That night, however, he was attacked by an armed man on the highway, who presented a musket at his breast, threatening his life. He was allowed at last to proceed, but found that the bridge at Chester was broken down. "With our saddle-bags," he says, "upon our backs, we crept on our hands and knees on a narrow plank to that part of the great bridge that remained standing, and got our horses over the next morning. Thus, through the mercy and goodness of God, we got safe into Chester that night, and the next night into Philadelphia. Here we met three or four of our preachers, who, like our-

selves, were all refugees. I continued near six weeks before I got a passage, and then embarked for Cork in Ireland; from thence to Wales, and then crossed the passage to Bristol."

He resumed his ministry in England, and labored with his characteristic ardor till 1791, when, after twenty-three years of itinerant life, his infirm health required him to take a supernumerary relation to the Conference. He retired to Frome, on Congleton Circuit, but there continued his evangelical work as he had strength, preaching often, "visiting the sick constantly and at all hours, and faithfully discharging the duties of a Class Leader, having three large Classes under his care. It was by his own diligent exertions that these Classes had been raised; two of them met in his own house."[8] In these later years his preaching is described as not remarkable for any intellectual superiority; but "in unction and effectiveness" he is said to "have been surpassed by few." "Being intensely devotional, he walked with God, and enjoyed in rich maturity the 'perfect love that casteth out fear.' He was a living sacrifice. He 'kept back no part of the price,' and received in return such a luminous assurance of the divine acceptance of the offering that his joy was full. He literally toiled for souls. The force of his character and the power of his influence was great, and was felt far beyond the circle of the Wesleyan community. He rose early, and began the day with God. Long before the dawn, parties passing to their work often heard him engaged in wrestling prayer."

He had, till the end of his life, more than a hundred persons under his care as a Class Leader. At an inspection of them by Jabez Bunting it was found that "more

[8] Wes. Meth. in the Congleton Circuit, by Rev. J. B. Dyson. London, 1856, p. 109.

than ninety were clear in their Christian experience, and many of them were living in the enjoyment of the perfect love of God." He found a good wife in his latter years, had a competent livelihood, assembled his neighboring brethren of the ministry every Saturday afternoon at his table, and enjoyed an enviable old age. Nor could some years of blindness interrupt his serene happiness. By a surgical operation his sight was restored. "You will have the pleasure," said his surgeon, "of seeing to use your knife and fork again." "Doctor," replied the veteran, "I shall have a greater pleasure, that of seeing to read my Bible;" and the first use of his restored sight was to read the sacred pages through three delightful hours; reading and weeping with inexpressible joy.

This old soldier of the cross, worn out with infirmities and labors in both hemispheres, had at last a triumphant end. When informed by his physician that his disease would be fatal, "he broke out in rapture, exclaiming, Glory to God!" "While he lay in view of an eternal world, and was asked if all was clear before him, he replied, 'I bless God it is;' and added, 'Victory, victory, through the blood of the Lamb!' Two friends, who were anxious for his recovery, called upon him, and when they inquired how he was, he replied, 'I am going to my Father's house, and find religion to be an angel in death." His last words were, "I'll praise! I'll praise! I'll praise!" He fell asleep on the 11th of March, 1816, in the 78th year of age.

George Shadford excelled any of Wesley's other American missionaries in immediate usefulness. His ardor kindled the Societies with zeal. He was the chief "revivalist" of the times — a man of tender feelings, warmest piety, and wonderful unction in the pulpit. Asbury and all his fellow-itinerants loved him. The

elder Methodists of America long delighted to recall his memory as precious. His preaching displayed no great intellectual ability, but was pathetic and consolatory, and abounded in scriptural phraseology and familiar illustrations. He was very effective in prayer. A Wesleyan preacher, who knew him in his old age, records that during the period of his own ministry in Frome, where Shadford resided, "I often experienced the efficacy of his prayers in the soul-converting influence it brought down upon my discourses. Being held in general esteem throughout the town, he had extensive access to the dwellings both of the rich and the poor, and in his visits his constant aim was to do good. His patriarchal appearance, his great simplicity and kindness of manner, and above all, his unmistakable piety, always caused his advice and admonitions to be listened to with respect. Many sought counsel from his lips, and an interest in his prayers."[9]

[9] Biog. Tracts, No. 14, p. 15. London.

CHAPTER IV.

LABORS AND TRIALS DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Watters itinerating in Maryland and Virginia — Sanctification — Watters locates — Freeborn Garrettson — His early Life — His Conversion — He emancipates his Slaves — Goes about doing good — Begins to preach — Ezekiel Cooper — Garrettson itinerating in Maryland, Virginia, and Delaware — Scenes in his Ministry — Hartley preaching through the windows of Talbot Jail — Garrettson attacked on the Highway — Caleb Boyer — Garrettson mobbed at Dover — Pioneering — He is cast into Prison — His Success.

Young Watters was abroad, abundant in labors and patient in trials, during this troubled period. He went from the Philadelphia Conference of 1775 to the Frederick Circuit, Md. It extended over a region which might still be called the frontier. The roads were difficult, the settlements very scattered, the habitations mostly log-cabins, without conveniences for the sojourner. Watters went to proclaim his message through this wilderness, desponding often on his route, but he was refreshed at last by unexpected success. About midsummer a spiritual awakening appeared in almost every appointment of his circuit. He records that it was affecting to see how the people turned out, by day and by night, from their secluded homes with "earnest looks and many tears," inquiring "about the things of the kingdom." Every week he was cheered with conversions—several often at a single meeting. His own earnest spirit was kindled with the extending interest, and reconciled to all the labors and privations of his hard

field. "I often preached, prayed, and exhorted," he says, "till I was so exhausted that I was scarcely able to stand. This flame not only spread among sinners, but among professors of religion also, and even reached my poor heart, so that I could not but bless and praise God's holy name that though I was deprived of many conveniences, yet he made all up unto me, and I was contented to sleep in cabins, to eat a dry morsel, and frequently to retire into the woods to read, to meditate, and pray. My Lord and Master had not on earth a place to lay his head, and shall not I be thankful for the meanest place? He was hated, spit upon, condemned, crucified; and shall such a worm as I look for anything better?"

The changes of preachers from circuit to circuit were still semi-annual. After six months unremitted labors, during which scores of converts were gathered into the Church, Watters departed for Fairfax Circuit, Va., where, notwithstanding the prevalent political and military agitations, his powerful ministrations bore down all before him over at least two thirds of his circuit, a flame of "revival kindling and spreading from appointment to appointment." "In less than a quarter," he writes, "we had the greatest revival I had ever seen in any place. If ever I was enabled to labor for the salvation of souls, it was now." There were some "very astonishing instances of the mighty power of God in the conversion of respectable persons;" among whom he mentions, as one of his trophies, Nelson Reed, destined to be a standard-bearer in the itinerant ministry. "So gloriously," he adds, "did the word of the Lord prevail, that though there was preaching but once in three weeks in the same place," he being the only preacher on the circuit, "yet in five or six months there were added to the Society upward of one hundred souls. Though wars and rumors

of wars were all around us, we were permitted to dwell in peace, while every man sat under his own vine and under his own fig-tree, none daring to make him afraid."

The next year he brought from the Conference a fellow-laborer to this field, and enlarged it to a four-weeks' circuit. He extended his travels into Frederick and Berkeley Counties, breaking up new ground, and preaching with success where a Methodist itinerant had never been heard. "This tour," he says, "through different neighborhoods and among all sorts of people, was much blessed to my soul. I had many powerful seasons, and labored day and night, while the people came from all quarters to hear the words of eternal life." He seldom preached in any place without "seals to his ministry." On Berkeley Circuit especially, "the work increased on every hand." He closed the year among the cabins of Frederick Circuit, praying and studying in the woods, preaching in the barns, and rejoicing with "a simple-hearted, loving people," "happy in being of one heart and one mind — with few disputes," and "few falling off — the most growing in grace."

The next year he set off from the Conference, in company with several preachers, for the noted Brunswick Circuit in Southern Virginia. His companions on the route were destined to different and difficult fields between the James and Roanoke Rivers. They rode forth with the consciousness of the responsibility and the sure success of apostles. "Their conversation was," he writes, "such as became the Gospel, edifying and strengthening, while most of us were entire strangers to all we met. We all appeared to breathe the same spirit, and I verily believe our sole desire, in leaving our little all, was that we might be instrumental, in the hands of God, in bringing lost sinners into the fold

of Christ." On the route he heard M'Roberts, the friend of Jarratt, preach a genuinely evangelical sermon. "It was the first example," he says, of such a discourse heard by him from a clergyman of the Church of England. M'Roberts, impatient of the secular, not to say profane spirit of his clerical associates, subsequently left the Church and became a Presbyterian pastor, but never lost his evangelical zeal and usefulness. Jarratt's home was on Watters's circuit, and the zealous rector received the itinerant as a brother, beloved not only in the faith, but in its apostleship, esteeming him worthy of more than ordinary honor for the humility and hardships of his labors. "Weak, and hardly able to sit on my horse," writes Watters, "I at last came to the house of Mr. Jarratt, with whom I staid a night, as I did every time I came round my circuit. His barn, well fitted up with seats and a pulpit, was one of our preaching places, and I found him very friendly and attentive to me while I staid in these parts." It required six weeks, with almost daily preaching, to pass round the circuit. There were already large societies in almost every neighborhood, the fruits of the ministrations of Jarratt, Williams, Asbury, and other laborers. Watters had two colleagues, but he says his "hands were full."

He expected greater success than he realized on this lively circuit, but he records, "The Lord evidently owned us, in every neighborhood, both in and out of our Societies. We labored to the utmost of our abilities in the cause of our glorious Master, and daily found his service perfect freedom." The military troubles of the times reached the evangelists even in this remote region. At a Quarterly Meeting at Maybery's Chapel in the summer of 1777, attended by all the Circuit and many Local Preachers, as well as a large assembly of the people, they

were interrupted by a magistrate as suspicious men from beyond the limits of the state. Watters, however, and one of his brethren, took the oath of allegiance, as proof of their loyalty, and the threatening storm passed away. "Our preaching," he says, "commenced immediately. The Lord was present and gave utterance, and the Word was as 'a hammer and fire, that break the rock in pieces.' The little seeming opposition roused the minds of some of our friends, and several appeared to possess a good degree of the spirit of martyrs. The God of Daniel was in our midst, and many, on both days of our meeting, shouted aloud the praises of our Immanuel. We parted filled with love, and more than ever determined to follow the Lord fully."

He spent some time on the Pittsylvania Circuit, and the next year traveled with remarkable success that of Sussex. While passing the second time around this circuit his word had unusual power—"the windows of heaven were opened, and the Lord poured out such a blessing as our hearts were not able to contain." Some of the rustic assemblies were overwhelmed with the truth. "We were so filled," he says on one occasion, "with the love of God, and overawed with his divine majesty, that we lay prostrate at his footstool, scarcely able to rise from our knees for a considerable time, while there were strong cries and tears from every part of the house for that perfect love which casteth out fear." Jarratt and the devoted Methodist itinerants had preached faithfully, in these parts of Virginia, Paul's doctrine of "perfection," John's doctrine of "perfect love;" and Watters records that he had never met before with so many living examples of it as in the societies of this circuit. He caught from them the same spirit. "O my God! when shall I awake with thy likeness, and be filled

with thy fullness!" was his constant prayer. A new epoch here occurred in his personal history. He had been remarkable for his devotion, the transparent purity and simplicity of his religious life, and the benignity of his temper; but he had seen, especially by the aid of Wesley's writings, that there were "deep things of God" which he had not fathomed, and he consecrated himself to an absolute devotion. In a little circle of praying friends, "I was," he says, "in an agony of prayer, and my heart was ready to burst with longing after the blessing, expecting every moment to hear the kind release, 'go in peace, sin no more.' My cry was incessant. 'Father, glorify thy name, pour out thy Spirit.'" Then "followed a deep and awful sense of the Divine presence, an inward calm, which words cannot express. I was in my own eyes less than the least of God's people, and knew that all was of grace." But he dare not yet "confidently conclude" that his "soul was renewed in love." Subsequently he "found that it is by faith we stand in every state of grace," that sanctification, like justification, is by faith. Walking with a friend, they retired into a solitary place, and on their knees most "earnestly desired not to rise till every doubt were removed." There, in the calm solitude, he was "most graciously and powerfully blessed and filled with confidence and peace." Powerful as his earnest ministry had hitherto been, it now took a new tone; its energy, if more calm, was more effective. The "most glorious work" that ever he "had seen was on this circuit among believers. Scores professed to be sanctified to the Lord;" he "could not be satisfied without pressing upon Christians their privilege" in this respect, and he records that wherever "they were exhorted to go on to perfection the Word was blessed."

His next circuit was Fairfax, where, he says, the truth

prevailed mightily, notwithstanding the war; he remarks, indeed, that this was generally the case throughout the country. "It is not more astonishing than true, that the work continued to spread in all those parts where we had preachers to labor, and I doubt whether, at any time before or since, it has been more genuine among us than during the war." This is an anomalous fact, but it has its explanation in that providential relation of the Methodistic movement to the national destiny which has already been discussed.

The sacramental controversy menaced the infant Church about this time with perilous if not fatal results. Watters, as we shall hereafter see, had important connections with that disturbance; he trembled for its probable consequences. Being the first and most prominent native itinerant, his influence among the disputants was unequaled, and he became the chief conciliator between the opposing parties. "I finally," he says, "came to the determination to endeavor, by every means in my power, to prevent a division; or, if that could not be done, to stand in the gap as long as possible." He was successful, and thus averted a disaster which might, at this early period in the history of the denomination, have proved ruinous.

In 1778 and 1779 he was on Baltimore Circuit. "I never," he writes, "traveled a circuit with more satisfaction." "There was a general movement and quickening among the members of the Societies. The ungodly, in many places, stood astonished, and could not but acknowledge that the arm of the Lord was revealed." Sanctification was now his almost habitual theme, and many were the witnesses of its power throughout his extensive field of labor. Years later he says: "Many, I am fully persuaded, to this day recollect those divine

seasons with grateful hearts, and have ever since felt their happy effects."

Down to the end of 1783 William Watters continued to travel in Maryland and Virginia, with a zeal that knew no abatement and a success hardly excelled by any evangelist of the denomination—often in new circuits in mountainous regions, his lodgings in log-cabins, his chapels barns, his health broken so much that, three or four times, his brethren expected to bury him, a martyr to his work. He was one of the few itinerants who had families. In 1783 he was compelled to locate, but he still labored indefatigably, one of his regular appointments being at least forty miles distant from his home; another, thirty. "I have never," he wrote, "since I knew the Lord, seen anything in this world worth living for an hour, but to prepare, and assist others to prepare, for that glorious kingdom which shall be revealed at the appearing of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." Not only many, but most of the itinerants of those early times had, sooner or later, to locate, on account of their worn-out health or domestic embarrassments; but they continued to perform more laborious service in the ministry than most of their itinerant successors, and the early outspread of Methodism through the land is scarcely less attributable to their zeal than to that of the "regular" Preachers. Hardly had Watters located when he was cheered by news of the arrival of Coke, with authority from Wesley to organize the Church. The first native itinerant, he had served faithfully through most of the forming period of the young denomination: he was now to see it take organic and permanent form; he will reappear on the scene, contributing important aid to the new development which was about to attend the cause for which he had labored and suffered so much.

It was in our present period that Freeborn Garrettson began that memorable ministerial career, which was to extend over more than half a century, and to leave historical and ineffaceable traces on the Church, from North Carolina to Nova Scotia. He was of an influential family of Maryland, a descendant of the first settlers of that province; the possessor of lands and slaves; a young man of firm but amiable character, and of strict early education by parents who were faithful members of the English Church. Before he was ten years old he was inclined to religious meditation, "feeling that he needed something" which he had never yet attained, but "knew not what it was," for he "had no one to take him by the hand and lead him into the narrow path." The "Spirit often strove with him," and "melted him into tenderness;" but none around him, not even his parish pastor, appeared competent to solve the problems of his anxious conscience, or teach him the true nature of religion. Strawbridge, as we have seen, was abroad in Maryland, and Garrettson met him and other itinerants. Their message was, at first, a mystery to him; yet he believed "they preached the truth," and he "dared not to join with the multitude in persecuting them."

All Methodists, laymen as well as preachers, were "witnesses" for the truth in those times. "One day, as I was riding home," says Garrettson, "I met a young man who had been hearing the Methodists, and had got his heart touched under the word. He stopped me in the road, and began to talk so sweetly about Jesus and his people, and recommended him to me in such a winning manner, that I was deeply convinced there was a reality in that religion, and that it was time for me to think seriously on the subject." He now betook himself to good books, lived a retired life, "read, prayed, wept

till after midnight," and often withdrew to the woods for prayer and meditation. Asbury passed through the neighborhood, and the awakened youth heard him with delight, following him from place to place, "fully persuaded that he was a servant of God," and surprised to hear him preach in a manner that seemed to imply a knowledge of the inmost troubles of his own soul. Watters, Webster, Rollins, and other evangelists crossed his path; "revivals" broke out; persecutions followed. Garrettson's father became alarmed for him, and the young man's "name was already cast out as evil," though he had made no open avowal of Methodism. He attempted to satisfy his conscience by living a "respectable" life, "bending his mind to the improvement of his property, and serving God in a private manner." He now attended the parish church regularly, fasted once a week, prayed in secret, rebuked profanity among his neighbors. "I was so fast set in my way," he says, "that I thought I should certainly go to heaven; and if at any time overtaken in sin I would endeavor to mend my pace, and pray more frequently." But he had to admit that "often," especially under Methodist preaching, his "foundation would shake." George Shadford's powerful ministration shook it thoroughly. A Methodist exhorter, casually conversing with him, shattered it. Under the preaching of Daniel Ruff, he was "so oppressed that he could scarcely support his burden;" and riding homeward through a lonely wood, agonized by the sense of his sinfulness, and of the necessity of regeneration, he dismounted and began to pray. But his prayer was for forbearance that he might yet delay till a more convenient season. Resuming his ride, he was again arrested with an overpowering consciousness that "now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation."

"I threw," he says, "the reins of my bridle on the horse's neck, and, putting my hands together, cried out, 'Lord, I submit!' I was less than nothing in my own sight, and was now, for the first time, reconciled to the justice of God. The enmity of my heart was slain, the plan of salvation was open to me. I saw a beauty in the perfections of the Deity, and felt that power of faith and love that I had been a stranger to. My soul was so exceeding happy that I seemed as if I wanted to take wing and fly away to heaven."

On reaching home he called his family together for prayer, and not many days after, while about to lead their devotions, he gave one of the best proofs of the genuineness of his new faith. He declared to all his slaves their freedom, convinced that "it is not right to keep our fellow-creatures in bondage." "Till then," he adds, "I had never suspected that slavekeeping is wrong; I had never read a book on the subject, nor been told so by any one. It was God, not man, that taught me the impropriety of holding slaves, and I shall never be able to praise him enough for it. My very heart has bled since that time for slaveholders, especially those who make a profession of religion; for I believe it to be a crying sin." It was while standing in the midst of his family and slaves, with a hymn book in his hand, beginning their family worship, that he pronounced his servants free. They all knelt before their common God as his common children. The devout young man, following thus a conscientious intuition of his purified mind, experienced at once the inexpressible consolation of such well-doing; "a divine sweetness," he says, "ran through my whole frame." "Had I the tongue of an angel I could not describe what I felt."

And now, like most Methodists of that day, he "went

about doing good," with no definite idea of preaching, but "bearing his testimony" for what God had done for him. At the first house he visited its head was enraged and repelled him; "but," he says, "the Lord gave me one or two of his children;" at the second the "master was brought to cry on his knees for mercy before the Lord." The third was nearly twenty miles distant, but he reached it before night, and related his "experience;" "after prayer," he writes, "the neighbors were called in; I was obliged, for the first time, to open my mouth by way of exhortation; and the Lord filled it, and sent his arrows to the hearts of three sinners, one of whom slept very little that night, and another followed me nearly sixteen miles the next day."

He held meetings at his own house, at that of his brother, and at others; he thus became an Exhorter even before he had formally joined the Church. He formed classes. Rodda took him at last out upon his circuit, and he thus undesignedly became a preacher.

Alarmed at the responsibility of his new labors, and reluctant to become an itinerant, he mounted his horse to escape fifty miles to his home. A pious man met him on his way, and warned him to turn back; he went on, however, but at home opportunities of religious labor continually multiplied around him; he held meetings, exhorted, was attacked by ruffians, smitten on the face, mobbed, and summoned to drill as a soldier. When carried before a military officer he told his "experience," and sat on his horse "exhorting with tears" a thousand people; the court marshal dismissed him with a fine of twelve dollars and a half a year, but he was never called upon to pay it. He soon had appointments in every direction. Daniel Ruff called him out to a circuit. He went, never again to turn back. Thus began, in the

year of his conversion, 1775, his ministerial life. Leaving Ruff, he went out to form a new circuit. "I was wandering along," he says, "in search of an opening for the word, in deep thought and prayer, that my way might be prosperous." When opposite a gate he received "a sudden impression; 'turn in, this is the place where you are to begin.'" The master of the house was an officer of rank, and, it being muster day, marched his troops to the front of the house to hear the Itinerant; "many tears were shed, and several of them were converted, one of whom has since become a preacher." The latter was the son of the officer, a youth of thirteen years, who afterward became one of the most able and eminent champions of the denomination.[1]

At the Conference of 1776 Garrettson was received on trial, and appointed to Frederick Circuit. Three different times he turned his horse toward his home, from his new field, desponding under his diffidence and the hardships of his work; but prayer in the solitary woods, extraordinary impressions of his discourses awakening his hearers, or providential impediments, deterred him, and at last confirmed him in his lifelong mission of labor and sacrifice. A score were sometimes converted and added to the feeble Societies of the circuit at a single meeting. In six months he went to Fairfax Circuit. He extended his travels far up the Potomac to what was called New Virginia, where his labors were greatly successful. "Glory to God!" he wrote many years later, "he enabled me to travel largely through that country, to preach one, two, three, and sometimes four sermons a day. The last sermon I preached there was a time not soon to be forgotten. A large congregation seemed to drink in every word; so much of the divine presence was felt that I con-

[1] He was the Rev. Ezekiel Cooper.

tinued nearly three hours, and then the people hung around me in such manner that I could scarcely get from them, begging me with tears not to leave them."

He was sent, the next year, to the famous Brunswick Circuit, with Watters; there of course he had triumphant times, large congregations, overwhelming effects of the word, meetings held in barns, or under the trees, which reminded him of the Pentecostal assembly of the Apostles. He penetrated southward into North Carolina. He failed not to inculcate his opinions of slavery, and preached often to the slaves, weeping with them in their wrongs, rejoicing with them in their spiritual consolations. He was menaced by persecutors, interrupted sometimes in his sermons, threatened by armed men, and one of his friends was shot (but not mortally) for entertaining him; "but," he says, "the consolations afforded me were an ample compensation for all the difficulties I met with wandering up and down." It was amid these scenes that, like his colleague Watters, he attained the higher experience of that "perfect love which casts out fear."

His next circuit was Kent, Md., where he was exposed to those political and military hostilities which, as we have seen, prevailed against the Methodists, chiefly from the imprudence of Rodda and the treason of Clowe. One of his colleagues, Hartley, was imprisoned, the others were dispersed, and he was left alone to bear the brunt of the persecution. Hartley, a Virginian, after preaching six months, had been received by the Conference in 1776, and sent to Kent Circuit; he subsequently labored in Baltimore, and in 1777 returned to Kent, where, in 1778, he was seized and imprisoned in Talbot jail; but he continued to preach through the windows of his prison. The people gathered to hear him from ten

and fifteen miles around; many were converted by his word, and his enemies were happy at last to get rid of him by allowing him to resume his travels. Soon after, the magistrate who had committed him was seized with fatal sickness, and sending for him, said: "When I sent you to jail I was fighting against God, and now I am about to leave the world; pray for me!" His family were called in, and he declared to his wife, "This is a servant of God; when I die, I request he may preach at my funeral. You need not think I have not my senses; this is the true faith." He then gave Hartley charge of his family, and desired them to embrace Methodism as true Christianity.[2]

"God enabled me to go forward," writes Garrettson, "through good and through evil report; he stood by me, and I went on without fear." His friends in Kent entreated him not to hazard his life by traveling at large, but he "traveled through the country preaching once, twice, thrice, and sometimes four sermons a day to listening multitudes bathed in tears." "I shall not soon forget," he adds, "the 24th of June, 1778. O what a wringing of hands among sinners, and crying for mercy! God's people praising him from a sense of his divine presence. O how did my heart rejoice in God my Saviour! I went through Cecil County, and part of Delaware State. A precious flame was kindled in many

[2] Garrettson's Life, p. 102. In a note Garrettson says that Hartley was "a dear good man, and an excellent preacher. The rulers laid hands on him and confined him in Talbot jail; but he preached powerfully through the window. The blessed God owned his word, and he was instrumental in raising a large Society. He was confined a long time, till finally they thought he might as well preach without as within jail. Shortly after he was set at liberty he married a pious young lady and located. He did not live many years, but while he did live he was very useful, and adorned his Christian and ministerial character He died in the Lord, and went to glory."

hearts, and many were brought to inquire what they should do to be saved. I visited Mr. Asbury, at Judge White's, and found him very unwell. I had a sweet opportunity of preaching at his place of confinement. After some agreeable conversation with him I went on to Maryland, and had much liberty in preaching to our persecuted friends in Queen Anne."

The next day he was near receiving the honors of martyrdom. Being unmolested in the congregation he deemed himself safe, notwithstanding he had been threatened privately with imprisonment. But on riding away he was met by an opposer, formerly a judge of the county, who struck him on the head with a bludgeon. The itinerant attempted to escape, but was overtaken by the swifter horse of his assailant, and, struck again, fell senseless to the ground. He was carried to a neighboring house and bled by a person, who passing by, providentially had a lancet. It was supposed he could live but a few minutes; "the heavens," he writes, "seemed in a very glorious manner opened, and by faith I saw my Redeemer standing on the right hand of the Father pleading my cause. I was so happy that I could scarcely contain myself." The ruffian who assailed him seemed to relent, and sat by his bedside listening to his exhortations, and offered to carry him in his own carriage wherever he wished to go. The itinerant was cited, however, before a magistrate, who boisterously charged him with violating the laws. "Be assured," replied Garrettson, "this matter will be brought to light in an awful eternity." The pen dropped from the magistrate's hand, and the preacher was allowed to retire. Taken into a carriage by the friendly passenger who had bled him, he was safely borne away, and that night was again preaching in a private house, though his bed was his

pulpit. He suffered very little opposition in the county afterward. The next day he rode many miles and preached twice, his "face bruised, scarred, and bedewed with tears;" his hearers were deeply affected, and his own soul was triumphant with grateful joy that he could suffer for Christ. "It seemed," he writes, "as if I could have died for him." In a few days he returned courageously to the place of his sufferings, and preached to a numerous and deeply affected concourse of people. He had conquered the field.[3]

He afterward traversed the State of Delaware, preaching with remarkable power. Again he returned to Maryland, "and the work of the Lord went on prosperously." He founded societies, introduced Methodism into many new fields, and such was the peculiar energy and pathos with which he preached, that his journal is almost a continuous record of "melted congregations," "powerful awakenings," (in which not a few hearers were smitten down to the ground,) conquered opposers, and prolonged meetings, from which the eager multitude could hardly be persuaded to retire. He was the first Methodist preacher who visited Kent Island, and laid the foundation of the denomination there. In Mispillian he preached under a venerable tree, which is still standing, and some of his converts there afterward founded the Society of Barratt's Chapel. Caleb Boyer was

[3] In 1809 Mr. Garrettson was visiting his old friends in this region, when a near relation of Mr. B., who beat him, was the principal vestryman in the Episcopal Church; and to make some atonement for the treatment he received in 1778, an almost unheard-of favor for that country was conferred upon him, in an invitation to preach in the old church at Church Hill. He accepted the invitation, and seldom, if ever before, was the church so crowded with Church folks and Methodists, white and black; and it was a moving time. A similar favor was extended to Dr. Coke in 1784, who preached in this church by invitation of the vestry.—*Lednum*, p. 215.

awakened under one of these sermons, and became "a great preacher among the Methodists,"[4] "the St. Paul" of the denomination, distinguished by the acumen and force of his argumentative defense of the Gospel. Garrettson preached at Boyer's father's house, and formed there a Society in 1778, which is still represented at Banning's Chapel, below Dover.

He began his labors in Dover amid a storm of opposition in the latter part of 1778. He had been invited thither by a gentleman who had been profited by his ministry elsewhere. Hardly had he dismounted from his horse when the mob gathered, crying out, "He is a Tory; he is one of Clowe's men; hang him, hang him;" while others shouted in his defense. Hundreds of clamorous voices resounded around him. "I was in a fair way," he says, "to be torn in pieces." He was rescued, however, by some friendly gentlemen, one of whom, taking him by the hand and leading him to the steps of the academy, bade him preach, and declared he would stand by him. The evangelist cried aloud to the multitude. He was heard through most of the town. The crowd wept. One person sitting in a window, a quarter of a mile distant, was alarmed by the truth, and afterward converted. More than twenty of his hearers were awakened. The ringleader of the mob repented and betook himself to the reading of the Bible, and "never again persecuted the children of God." Garrettson preached repeatedly in the town, formed a Society, and "the Lord was with them, spreading his word and converting many souls." Dr. M'Gaw, the English clergyman of Dover, now took side with the Methodists and promoted their success. "The prejudices of the people began to fall away amazingly," says the itinerant, "and

[4] Lednum.

hundreds were enabled to rejoice in the kingdom of grace."

He went into Sussex County, and at Broad Creek preached to hundreds in a wood. They were a notoriously vicious people: "swearers, fighters, drunkards, horseracers, gamblers, and dancers." They now wept around him, as he declared, "I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God," etc. More than thirty "were powerfully awakened," all of whom were joined in a Society. One of his hearers afterward attempted to shoot him, coming into the audience with a pistol for the purpose, but was prevented. The whole neighborhood was reformed, and Methodism effectually planted there. A hearer from Salisbury was converted, and opened the way for his preaching in that town. Garrettson was threatened by leading townsmen with imprisonment. The sheriff came to seize him, but was confounded and left him. Methodism was thus founded in Salisbury. While preaching at Broad Creek, an aged and devout couple who had heard Whitefield, heard him and invited him to their house at Quantico. "Many years ago," they said to him, "we heard Mr. Whitefield preach; and until we heard you, we had not heard a Gospel sermon for twenty years. The first time we heard you preach we knew it was the truth; but we only had a little spark left. Yesterday we heard you again, and the little spark was blown up to a coal; and, glory to God! to-day the coal is blown up to a flame. We cannot hide ourselves any longer from you; our house and hearts are open to receive you and the blessed word you preach." He went, and a Society was formed, with the venerable couple at its head,[5] the first Methodist

[5] Their name was Ryder. "There have been many valuable Methodists of the Ryder family about Quantico and Salisbury," says Lednum, p. 219.

Church in Somerset County, Md. A chapel was soon erected.

In April, 1779, "I was led," he says, "still further into the wilderness." It was his delight to pioneer the Gospel into new and desolate places. "Although in those new places I had none," he writes, "to converse with, at first, who knew the Lord, yet Jesus was blessed company to me in my retirement. Often the wilderness was my closet, where I had many sweet hours in communion with God." We next trace him to "a place called the Sound, near the seashore, in the region of Cypress Swamp, Sussex County, Del." "The work of the Lord broke out there," he says; "the people wept on every side, and after three hours' service they seemed fixed to the spot." Many walked ten or twelve miles to hear him. He soon formed a Society of thirty converts. He encountered some opposition here also. A hostile interloper interrupted his sermon to discuss his theology, but became convinced of his own ignorance, and asked pardon of the preacher for the disturbance. "Being a man of some note, it proved a blessing to the people." An influential citizen set up a "reading meeting" in opposition to the itinerant, but "the power of God reached his heart, so that he gave it up and joined the Society." The Churchmen of the region sent for one of their distant clergymen to come and preach down the new excitement. He arrived, preached once, and then meeting with Garrettson on the highway, was soon convinced that he was fighting against God, and went home, determined never again to oppose the Methodists. The influence of Methodism was most beneficent in all this destitute region of Cypress Swamp. The people had been incredibly demoralized. Garrettson met with many who knew not the most elementary truths of religion

Accosting one of them, he asked him if he "knew the Lord Jesus Christ?" "Sir," was the reply, "I know not where the gentleman lives." Supposing he was misunderstood, Garrettson repeated the question, and was answered, "I know not the man." The best Methodist chronicler of these regions says that in some parts of the Peninsula the people had no religion whatever.[6] Garrettson, in a later note to his Journal, alludes to the great improvement of all this part of the country by the introduction of Methodism. "When he first went among them, the people, their land and houses, with but few exceptions, were poor. What was worst of all, they were destitute of even the form of godliness. Many of them preferred fishing and hunting to cultivating the land. After the Gospel came among them religion spread rapidly, and they became industrious and happy; left off gambling, tilled their land, built houses, and attended to their spiritual interests, so that he says, 'After a few years, in retracing my footsteps in this country, I found that my younger brethren in the ministry who had succeeded me had been blessed in their labors, and everything appeared to wear a different aspect. Experience had taught many that there is nothing like the Gospel in its purity to meliorate both the temporal and spiritual condition of man; and my prayer is that it may find its way throughout the whole world to the destruction of idolatry and infidelity.'" The Peninsula became a "garden of Methodism." Garrettson's congregations, under the trees, were a thousand and even fifteen hundred strong. His pathetic eloquence and genial spirit, his tact and unction swayed the whole region. "Glory to God!" he exclaims, "I preached in a variety of places through this wilderness, and many

[6] Lednum, p. 227.

were convinced and brought to the knowledge of the truth. They built a church, and the Lord raised up several able speakers among them. There was an amazing change both in the disposition and manners of the people. The wilderness and solitary places began to bud and blossom as the rose, and many hearts did leap for joy. Hundreds who were asleep in the arms of the wicked one awoke, and were inquiring the way to Zion with their faces thitherward."

He was soon away to other parts of Delaware, almost invariably encountering hostility at first, but always conquering it. In one place thirty persons were awakened, and were following him to his next appointment, when an enraged persecutor attacked him and presented a musket to his breast, but was overpowered by his friends; the assailant was soon after a weeping penitent, and joined the Methodists. He returned to Salisbury to learn that a mob awaited him to send him to jail. It consisted of the first people of the county. The previous night they had attacked the house where he usually lodged, and not finding him, seized its head and dragged him down the chamber stairs, and along the streets, injuring him so seriously that he would probably have perished had not a magistrate rescued him. Garrettson's brethren insisted on his immediate departure. "I have come," he replied, "to preach my Master's Gospel, and I am not afraid to trust him with body and soul. Many came out to hear me; I understood that the mob sent one of their company to give information of the most convenient time to take me. While I was declaring, 'The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished,' the heart of the spy, who sat close by me, was touched, and the tears ran

plentifully down his face. After service he returned to his company, and told them I had preached the truth, and if they laid a hand on me he would put the law in force against them. They withdrew to their homes without making the slightest attempt upon me. O who would not confide in so good a God! After our blessed meeting was over, I rode three miles and had a pleasant time with a few of my friends. Glory be to God! he is carrying on a gracious work about this place. All this week I spent in preaching and visiting the young Societies."

He now projected an "inroad" into a neglected part of Delaware, whither he had never gone, and where the demoralization, the simplicity, and the rudeness of the rustic population presented not a few difficulties as well as incentives to his mission. Much of the population had few if any just ideas of religion. The preaching of the times had failed to instruct them, and Methodism was like a new Gospel to them. Their boisterous vices found, at first, amusement in its services, but their simple minds soon awoke under its illumination. Many were the odd rencounters of the itinerant in this tour; illustrations at once of the moral condition of the times, and the power of the truth when proclaimed with plainness and courage. "I had appointed," he writes, "a friend, who had given me an invitation to Lewistown, to meet me and conduct me through the country, so that numbers had knowledge of my intention to pass that way. All along the road many were standing at their doors and windows gazing, and I could hear some of them say as I passed, 'There he is;' 'O he is like any other man.' I rode about thirty miles, and got to my appointment about three; about four o'clock I began, and, shortly after I gave out the text, the brother of the man in

whose house I was to preach came to the door with a gun and a drum, and several other implements, and after beating his old drum a while, he took the gun, and was dodging about as though he was taking aim to shoot me. This greatly terrified the women, so that there was nothing but confusion. I then stopped and withdrew to a private room. Soon after, the town squire and several other magistrates came, and among the rest a minister. The squire commanded him to depart immediately to his own house or behave himself, otherwise he would send him to jail. We now had peace, and I found great freedom to finish my sermon. I have no doubt but the Lord began this work. The minister told some of the people afterward that I held out nineteen errors. The squire told me the court-house was at my service, and I should be welcome to his house. Wednesday my enemy, set on by a few others, came into the court-house while I was preaching, not with a gun and drum, but with fire, which he put in the chimney, and then began to heap on wood, though the day was exceedingly warm: finding that this did not disturb me, he brought in a bell and rang it loudly through the house. I stopped, and inquired if any would open a large private room. Many were offered, and I withdrew and finished my sermon at the house of a kind widow woman. In spite of all the opposition, the word found way to the hearts of the hearers; and though severely tempted of the devil, and persecuted by many of his servants, my heart was with the Lord, and many were the sweet moments I had in secret."

He kept his ground, and on the next Sabbath preached to a crowd in the court-house; but the bell over his head was rung violently to announce service at the neighboring church, where he was lustily assailed by the preacher;

"but," he writes, "the more they preached and spoke against me, the more earnestly did the people search their Bibles to know whether these things were so." "I had," he continues, "an appointment a few miles from the town by the side of a river, and some declared that if I went there they would drown me. I went and found a large concourse of people, and preached with much freedom, but no man assaulted me. I had five miles to my afternoon's appointment, and when I had got two miles on my way I looked behind and saw a man dressed like a soldier, riding full speed, with a great club in his hand. I now found it necessary to exercise my faith. When he came up to me he reached out his hand, saying, 'Mr. Garrettson, how do you do? I heard you preach, and believe your doctrine to be true. I heard you was to be abused at the river to-day, and I equipped myself as you see me, and have rode twenty miles in your defense, and will go with you if it is a thousand miles, and see who dare lay a hand upon you." Friend, said I, the Scripture tells us that vengeance belongs to God, and not to man. 'Very true, sir,' said he, 'but I think I should be justifiable in so glorious a cause.'" The honest man found no occasion to use his bludgeon; the itinerant had more effectual weapons. He won the victory, and went on his way prevailing everywhere. "I traveled and preached all through the forest," he says, "and the Lord enlarged my heart, and gave me many precious souls, for numbers were brought to inquire after religion."

After spending some fifteen months on the Peninsula, at the end of which nearly thirteen hundred members of Society were returned to the Conference from Delaware and Kent County, Garrettson passed northward. He had remained so long in Delaware and Maryland in order to supply the place of Asbury, who was still in confine-

ment at the mansion of Judge White. In 1780 he was appointed, with two colleagues, to New Jersey. He there preached from ten to twelve sermons a week. "I bless God," he wrote, "for the prosperous journey he gave me." In the autumn we find him again on the Peninsula founding the denomination in Dorchester County. A young lady of the county, sister-in-law to Bassett, of Bohemia Manor, had been converted while visiting his family, and on her return had borne good and effectual testimony, for her new faith, among her kindred. Henry Airey, a gentleman of influence and a magistrate, was awakened by her conversation, and further led into a religious life by his friend Judge White. The way was thus opened for the establishment of Methodism in the county. Garrettson visited Airey's home and preached with great effect. The lady of the house and many of the black servants were converted. After spending several days with them he resumed his journey, accompanied by Airey, but was attacked on the highway by a mob, who beat his horse, and clamorously assailed him with blasphemies. After dark they bore him before a magistrate, who ordered him to prison. Airey and some of his friends started on before toward the jail. As his assailants were conducting Garrettson along the highway, a sudden flash of lightning dispersed them and he was left alone. "I was reminded," he says, "of that place of Scripture where our Lord's enemies fell to the ground, and then this portion of Scripture came to me, 'Stand still and see the salvation of God.' It was a very dark, cloudy night, and had rained a little. I sat on my horse alone, and though I called several times there was no answer. I went on, but had not got far before I met my friend Airey returning to look for me. He had accompanied me throughout the whole of this affair. We rode on,

talking of the goodness of God, till we came to a little cottage by the roadside, where we found two of my guards almost frightened out of their wits. I told them if I was to go to jail that night we ought to be on our way, for it was getting late. 'O no!' said one of them, 'let us stay until the morning.' My friend and I rode on, and it was not long ere we had a beautiful clear night. We had not gone far before the company collected again, from whence I know not. However they appeared to be amazingly intimidated, and the leader rode by the side of me, and said, 'Sir, do you think the affair happened on our account?' I told him that I would have him judge for himself; reminding him of the awfulness of the day of judgment, and the necessity there was of preparing to meet the Judge of the whole earth. One of the company swore an oath, and another immediately reproved him, saying, 'How can you swear at such a time as this?' At length the company stopped, and one said, 'We had better give him up for the present;' so they turned their horses and went back. My friend and I pursued our way. True it is, 'The wicked are like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.' We had not gone far before they pursued us again, and said, 'We cannot give him up.' They accompanied us a few minutes, again left us, and we saw no more of them that night." The next day, Sunday, they reappeared, twenty in number, headed by an aged man "with locks as white as a sheet," and a pistol in his hand. They seized the evangelist while preaching. He was borne away to Cambridge jail, where, during a fortnight, "I had," he says, "a dirty floor for my bed, my saddle-bags for my pillow, and two large windows open, with a cold east wind blowing upon me; but I had great consolation in my Lord, and could say, 'Thy will be done.'

During my confinement here I was much drawn out in prayer, reading, writing, and meditation. The Lord was remarkably good to me, so that I experienced a prison to be like a paradise; and I had a heart to pray for my worst enemies. My soul was so exceedingly happy I scarcely knew how my days and nights passed away. The Bible was never sweeter to me. I never had a greater love to God's dear children. I never saw myself more unworthy. I never saw a greater beauty in the cross of Christ; for I thought I could, if required, go cheerfully to the stake in so good a cause. Sweet moments I had with my dear friends, who came to the prison window. Many, both acquaintances and strangers, came to visit me from far and near, and I really believe I never was the means of doing more good for the time; for the country seemed to be much alarmed, and the Methodists among whom I had labored, to whom I had written many epistles, were much stirred up to pray for me. The word of the Lord spread through all that country, and hundreds both white and black have experienced the love of Jesus. Since that time I have preached to more than three thousand people in one congregation, not far from the place where I was imprisoned, and many of my worst enemies have bowed to the scepter of our sovereign Lord." In fine, this county presented, at first, the most formidable resistance to Methodism of any in the state, but was the most completely conquered. After about two years' labors, it reported nearly eight hundred Methodists; "and," says a late authority, "Methodism has long been honored here; there are but few professors of religion that belong to any other than the Methodist Episcopal Church."[7]

In 1780 Garrettson labored on Baltimore Circuit with

[7] Lednum, p. 253.

his usual success. In the same year he made an excursion to Little York in Pennsylvania, and there, amid a mixed population of Germans and English, with a greater variety of religious sects than he had ever found elsewhere, and no small amount of disputation and hostility, he preached for two months, with extraordinary results, in more than twenty places, and more than three hundred people were awakened. The next year he was sent into Virginia, where Jarratt received him cordially. The country was ravaged with war; the army of Cornwallis had entered it; and the sacramental controversy, among the Methodists, added not a little to the disturbance of the Churches. Garrettson preached within the sound of the guns of Yorktown. At Maybery's Chapel he addressed two thousand people, not forgetting to remonstrate with them about slavery; he formed new circuits, hastened about among the old circuits, and, wherever he went, spread a quickening sensation among the suffering Societies. In 1781 he traveled about five thousand miles, preached about five hundred sermons, visited most of the circuits in Virginia and North Carolina, and opened one new circuit, "in which the Lord began a blessed work, so that many, both rich and poor, joined the Society."

During the remainder of our present period he traveled and preached incessantly in Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Delaware, and found the Churches prospering in the hard-fought fields which he had won, through so many persecutions, within the preceding six or eight years. At Dover, the scene of one of his severest trials, he rejoiced, in 1783, over a successful Church, Bassett and his family being now among its chief supporters. "Surely," he wrote, "God is among this people. The last Sabbath I preached here the Lord in mercy laid his hand upon one of

the greatest persecutors in the town. Finding no rest, he cried mightily to God, and both he and his wife were converted, and his brother's wife; they are now happy in religion, going on hand in hand with the brethren; and he is resolutely determined on building a brick chapel. Shall we not give the glory to God, who can change the hearts of lion-like men and women in so short a time? God has done and is doing great things for the people in this town. I visited Mrs. Bassett, who has been a long time under the afflicting hand of divine Providence. I think her one of the happiest women I have met with. I believe her to be a living witness of sanctification; her soul seems to be continually wrapped in a flame of love. Several of this family are happy in the love of God; four of whom enjoy that degree of it which casts out fear. Surely God has a Church in this house."

In the autumn of 1783 he was about to depart to the Carolinas, determined to push the triumphs of the Gospel to the furthest South; but he was suddenly arrested by the news of Coke's arrival, and the important events which were immediately to follow. Coke soon reached him, at the house of Bassett, in Dover, and says: "Here I met with an excellent young man, Freeborn Garrettson. He seems to be all meekness and love, and yet all activity. He makes me quite ashamed, for he invariably rises at four in the morning, and not only he, but several others of the preachers. Him we sent off, like an arrow, from north to south, directing him to send messengers to the right and left, and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore on Christmas eve."[8]

[8] Coke's Journals, pp. 15, 16.

CHAPTER V.

FURTHER REVIEW OF THE PERIOD OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Philip Gatch itinerating — John Cooper's Trials — Gatch and Parson Kain — His Rencounters on Frederick Circuit — He is "Tarred" by a Mob — Escapes Conspirators — His Courage — On Hanover Circuit — Jarratt — Trials on Sussex Circuit — He Locates — His continued Usefulness — Emancipates his Slaves — Simplicity of the Primitive Minutes — Benjamin Abbott in New Jersey — Wonderful Physical Effects of his Preaching — Methodist Opinion on such Phenomena — Abbott's Character — His Colloquial Ministrations — He goes abroad preaching in New Jersey — Remarkable Examples of his Usefulness — James Sterling — Abbott and Sterling in Delaware and Pennsylvania — Remarkable Scenes — Martin Boehm — Abbott among the Germans — "Physical Phenomena" again — Scenes in Maryland — Abbott's "Thunder-gust Sermon — Revisits Delaware — Extraordinary Effects — Jesse Lee — He preaches in a Military Camp — Description of a Primitive Conference — His Labors and Character — Methodism during the Revolution—Church building—Startling Scene in Salem, N. J. — The British in New York — John-street Church — John Mann and Samuel Spraggs — British Persecutions — Central Methodism.

During most of the period now under review (1775–1784) Philip Gatch was "abundant in labors" and sufferings. Though he escaped imprisonment, "he was, perhaps, the subject of as much, or more, persecution for his Master's sake than any of his cotemporaries."[1] He was sent by the Conference of 1775 to Kent Circuit, in Maryland. His colleague was John Cooper, a young man whom he first met on Frederick Circuit, and had recommended to the Conference; a "man of a solemn, fixed countenance, who had suffered much persecution." Cooper's family had opposed him; his father seeing him

[1] Sketch of Rev. Philip Gatch, by Judge M'Lean, p. 49.

once on his knees, in a chamber, threw a shovel of hot embers upon him, and afterward expelled him from his home. His trials only confirmed him in his faith; he joined the itinerant band of evangelists, and lived and died in their ranks. Gatch encountered some trials on the Kent Circuit, especially from "Parson Kain," the noted opponent of all itinerants who appeared in that region. The evangelist, however, quietly but adroitly foiled him, and the clerical persecutor's flock was soon scattered, "his place was lost, and he troubled the Methodists no more."

While attending the Conference at Philadelphia Gatch had unconsciously taken the small-pox, which now broke out violently, arresting his travels and endangering his life. A Methodist family hospitably took care of him, though the father and a daughter of the house perished by the infection. He struggled through the attack, "suffering indescribably," and again mounted his horse and went forth preaching from town to town. Our borders, he says, were enlarged. In the fall he passed to Baltimore Circuit, where he traveled some time with success. Thence he pressed forward to Frederick Circuit. Hostilities still prevailed there, and he met with vexations, or more serious trials, at almost every settlement. At one of his appointments two Baptist preachers had lately been driven away, dragged from their preaching-stand; when he arrived, three leading citizens confronted and threatened him, but his calm courage could not be daunted. One of them examined his theology, and finding it not Calvinistic, succumbed; the others deemed it politic to follow this example, and all finally concluded to allow him to preach, and to stay and hear him. He won the field, his opponents could hardly tell how; but it was by the power of that combined courage, calmness, and

religious suavity which pre-eminently characterized him, and which compelled most of his opposers to feel that it was necessary to their own self-respect to treat him with respect. At his third appointment a stout persecutor thrust him from the door of the house in which he was to preach. A "small man," witnessing the scene, took him to his own house, defying the ruffian, and the itinerant courageously preached within hearing of the family from which he had been expelled.

Between Bladensburg and Baltimore he was to meet severer treatment. Under the ministry of one of his predecessors, the wife of a hardened opposer had been converted. The enraged husband determined to take revenge on the next itinerant who should make his appearance. As Gatch was riding along to his appointment, toward evening, followed by a procession of men, women, and children, on their way to hear him, two men seized the bridle of his horse and stopped him; others, till then in concealment, hailed the assailants, and the preacher was led up to the mob. They had made preparations for him and proceeded to tar him, "beginning at his left cheek." "The uproar," he writes, "now became very great, some swearing and some crying. My company was anxious to fight my way through. The women were especially resolute: they dealt out their denunciations against the mob in unmeasured terms. With much persuasion I prevented my friends from using violent means. I told them I could bear it for Christ's sake. I felt an uninterrupted peace. My soul was joyful in the God of my salvation. The man who officiated called out for more tar, adding that I was 'true blue.' He laid it on liberally. At length one of the company cried out in mercy, 'It is enough.' The last stroke, made with the paddle with

which the tar was applied, was drawn across the naked eyeball, which caused severe pain, from which I have never entirely recovered. In taking cold it often becomes inflamed, and quite painful. I was not taken from my horse, which was a very spirited animal. Two men held him by the bridle, while the one, elevated to a suitable height, applied the tar. My horse became so frightened that when they let him go he dashed off with such violence that I could not rein him up for some time, and narrowly escaped having my brains dashed out against a tree. If I ever felt for the souls of men I did for theirs. When I got to my appointment, the Spirit of the Lord so overpowered me that I fell prostrate before him for my enemies." He again conquered, notwithstanding this outrageous treatment; for the leader of the mob, who had applied the tar, and several of his associates, were afterward converted. But a conspiracy was formed by others to waylay, if not to murder the preacher. A number of ruffians concealed themselves under a bridge with weapons to attack him when he should pass over it. The design was revealed to some of his friends, and one of them rode over the bridge, while he was sent around on another road. The conspirators rushed upon his friend, but were confounded when they discovered not the preacher, but one of their own neighbors. Gatch escaped, and went on his way rejoicing and preaching.

Having failed in this attempt, his enemies circulated the worse slanders against him. They reported that he had been shot for robbing a man; that he had blacked himself for the purpose; but on being washed was found to be "Gatch the Methodist Preacher." No part of the country needed more such evangelical laborers as Gatch, for not a few of its population were in extreme demoralization. They had nearly destroyed the life of a young

exhorter by waylaying and whipping him; the "shirt upon his back, though made of the most substantial material, being literally cut to pieces." Gatch and his fellow-itinerants were no cowards; they gathered courage from their trials; and though they followed the Scripture precept, when persecuted in one city to flee to another, yet it was their policy to return in due time to the scene of hostilities, and never finally succumb. In four weeks he rode again to the same appointment where he had been "tarred" and threatened at the bridge. He thus refuted the report of his death as a robber. His friends had formed a guard for him, but he had no need of their aid. "I never," he says, "missed an appointment from the persecutions through which I had to pass, or the dangers to which I was exposed. I sometimes felt great timidity, but in the hour of danger my fears always vanished." The persecutions on Frederick Circuit were thus ended.

His next appointment was on Hanover Circuit, in Virginia. It extended along both sides of James River through six counties. The Baptists had preceded the Methodists in all this region, and "had rolled back the wave of persecution." Shubal Stearns and Daniel Marshall, two of their faithful evangelists, converts of Whitefield, had traversed it, sowing "the good seed." John Haller had endured fiery trials, being imprisoned at different times a hundred and thirteen days. Jarratt and M'Roberts had also repeatedly passed through the settlements, sounding the alarm, and there were now large congregations and zealous worshipers at the circuit appointments. Gatch had to preach mostly in the open air, for no house could contain his hearers. His health gave way. "It seemed at last," he says, "that his lungs were entirely gone. Frequently I would have to

raise myself up in the bed to get my breath. I felt it even a difficulty to live. The sensation of my whole system was as though thousands of pins were piercing me. While in the North I had to contend with persecution; now bodily affliction attended me."

Jarratt sheltered and consoled him. "He lived," says Gatch, "in the bounds of this circuit. He labored extensively, and was very useful. Several preachers were raised up under his ministry, who became connected with our Society, and some of them itinerated. He fitted up his barn for our accommodation, and it became a regular preaching-place, where quarterly meetings were occasionally held. The hospitalities of his house were generously conferred upon us, and he was truly a nursing father to Methodist preachers. Mr. Shadford had spent the principal part of his time, for two years, on this circuit. His ministry had been owned of the Lord. Great numbers had embraced religion; some professed sanctification, and the Societies were comfortably established in the Gospel of their salvation."

In 1777 he was sent to Sussex Circuit, Va., but his enfeebled health rendered him comparatively ineffective. Here also he had trials from persecutors. While riding to an appointment on a Sabbath morning, he was seized by two strong men, who caught hold of his arms and turned them, in opposite directions, with such violence, that he thought his shoulders would be dislocated, causing a torture which he supposed must resemble that of the rack—the severest pain he had ever felt. His shoulders were so bruised that they turned black, and it was a considerable time before he recovered the use of them. His lungs were also worse than ever. It seemed necessary for him to give up his work, but the circuit being divided, he attempted to take charge of the part of it

which lay on the north side of James River. "We enlarged our borders," he writes; "doors were freely opened, many received the Gospel in the love of its benefits, and by the Conference, we had formed a four-weeks' circuit."

His ill health continued, and he was compelled to retreat; he was also now a married man; at the Conference of 1778 his name disappears from the list of appointments. There was then no "supernumerary relation" recognized by that body; a preacher without an appointment was therefore without a record. Gatch located his family on a humble farm in Powhattan County, Virginia, but continued to labor in the ministry as his health would allow. One of his friends, referring to this period of his retirement, records that "He generally preached twice on the Sabbath, sometimes from ten to fifteen miles distant, attended many funerals, frequently administered the ordinance of baptism and matrimony. Many became convicted and were converted through his instrumentality. His house was a retreat for Methodist preachers, and his company much desired by them. He stood high as a preacher among ministers of other denominations, as well as those of his own Church, and was beloved by all Christians."

It was here that he liberated his slaves, nine in number, who had come into his possession by his marriage. He declared manfully in the deed of emancipation, "Know all men by these presents, that I, Philip Gatch, of Powhattan County, Virginia, do believe that all men are by nature equally free; and from a clear conviction of the injustice of depriving my fellow-creatures of their natural rights, do hereby emancipate and set free the following persons."

Asbury regretted the disappearance of Gatch's name

from the Minutes, and frequently recommended its reinsertion, insisting that he still belonged to the itinerant ministry, for he still labored extensively in his new neighborhood, and he had never, by his own act or that of the Conference, been formally dismissed from that body. After his removal to the West, whither we shall hereafter follow him, it was restored to the record. We shall have occasion to retrace his important services during the present period in the sessions of the Annual Conference, particularly in connection with the sacramental controversy. He and Watters, the first two native Methodist itinerants, were in the opposite parties of that controversy, and by their prudence and conciliatory loyalty saved the denomination from imminent disasters. He did active service for the Conference even when his name no longer appeared in its list of appointments. As the English preachers had retired before the storm of the Revolution, and Asbury was in confinement, the session of that body in 1777 appointed a committee of five to take the general superintendency of the denomination. It consisted of Gatch, Dromgoole, Glendenning, Ruff, and Watters. Gatch served in this capacity till Asbury could again venture into the open field. His services are however unnoticed in the published Minutes. It was yet the day of primitive simplicity in the Church; its annual records or Minutes seldom exceed a page in print; they record no names except of men who actually take appointments, save only that of Asbury; those who fall martyrs in their work are left in silence to the "record on high;" there are no "superannuates," no "supernumeraries," and down to 1779 no "locations" noticed. Even at this date the "locations" are not yet distinguished from secessions—all who retire from the itinerancy are classed as "desisting from traveling," and disappear

from the record, however laborious may be their subsequent services as "local preachers."

It is difficult to trace with exactness, through the present period, the labors of Benjamin Abbott, in many respects the most remarkable evangelist in the eventful field. This mighty but simple-minded apostle, intent only on the spiritual results of his humble mission, seldom pauses to note dates or localities. It is his "next appointment," and again, and still again, his "next appointment," with the marvelous effects of the truth that he records; hurrying us forward with intense interest, with frequent and bewildering surprises at the mysterious power of the man, and at both the spiritual and physical phenomena which it produces. If we can pause at all over his exciting narrative, it is to wonder at the moral, the beneficent efficacy of his ministrations, the peculiar, the magnetic eloquence of his unpolished discourse, and the questionable if not inexplicable problems of its physical effects. Seldom does he preach without some of these "physical phenomena;" his hearers by tens and scores fall like dead men to the earth. If he is himself, at first, astonished at these wonders, his simple and honest mind has a very direct logic respecting them. They are "insanity," they are "demoniacal," cry out shrewd and self-possessed spectators. Wait, replies the evangelist, let us see how these slain come to life again. If they are insane they will show it; if these strange things are of the devil they will recover their self-possession blaspheming and be worse than they were before. They "come to," not in general, but invariably, with words of praise upon their lips, with grateful tears, with resolutions and strength to live a new life. "Stand still," cried Abbott to gainsayers, "stand still and see the salvation of God." Intellectually he was incapable of other reasoning on the subject,

and went forward preaching, swaying and prostrating his wondering congregations. The preaching of no early Methodist itinerant was attended with more of these marvels, but they were not peculiar to him. Edwards had recorded them in his account of the "Great Awakening." They had occurred in the scene of Abbott's present labors in New Jersey, as we have seen, under the preaching of the Presbyterian evangelists of Whitefield's day. Among the severe-minded Scotch Whitefield's preaching had produced them, and cool, stout-hearted men had been carried out of his great congregations "as if slain in battle." They had attended Wesley's calm, perspicuous preaching, even before the powerful oratory of Whitefield produced them. Wesley could never reach any conclusive opinion of their character, though he instituted, at Newcastle, a sort of scientific investigation of their causes and symptoms. At one time he admits them to be the effect of divine influence; at another he suspects a diabolical cause. Charles Wesley conclusively condemned and endeavored to repress them. Richard Watson has expressed the general sentiment of Methodists respecting them, that though they are evidently physical, arising from some occult nervous susceptibility, peculiar, perhaps, to certain constitutions, they do not prove that an extraordinary work of God is not at the same time going on in the hearts of persons so affected; that by the exercise of a firm discipline, then most of all to be exerted, they are as far as possible to be repressed, "for the power of the work does not lie in them," and that yet discipline, though firm, ought to be cautious, for the sake of the real blessing, with which at such seasons God is crowning the administration of his truth.[3]

[3] History of the Religious Movement, etc., called Methodism, vol. ii. p. 126, where will be found a more extended examination of the subject

We shall hereafter have to record frequent examples of these "phenomena," especially in the West, not always arising from Methodistic influence, but, in the most extraordinary instance, from the ministrations of another denomination. Apparently a specific effect of religious excitement, on a peculiar cerebral susceptibility, they have been common to all religions. The tranquil Friends owe their name of "Quakers" to them. The devotees of Brahma and of Bhudda, the Dervishes of Islamism, the Convulsionaires of France, the Mystics of all faiths and all ages, have afforded examples of them. In our day they have occurred almost on a national scale in Ireland, in connection with a salutary religious interest. Our future science can alone give their just solution. But science has its pride and its pharisaism, as unbefitting to it as the same vices are to religion; it affected at first to ridicule Hervey, Jenner, Galileo, and Copernicus. A fastidious repugnance to the charge of charlatanism has led it, in the present age, to ignore or impute solely to imposture, falsely called "spiritualistic" phenomena, which have deluded half the civilized world, which have afforded the most palpable data for investigation, and in which imposture has evidently been but exceptional, while an occult and profoundly interesting scientific law has been indicated; a law the ascertainment of which would probably disclose the as yet dim and misty intermediate region that connects the material and immaterial worlds. The scientific solution of these mysteries might dispel a vast amount of superstition, and afford beneficent reliefs to our psychological and theological science.

To the student of such marvels the autobiography of Abbott offers the most curious data; a magnetic power, if such it can be called, which, intensified by his piety, was as irresistible, to certain temperaments, as the elec-

tricity of lightning—a seemingly clairvoyant discernment, a somnambulic insight and foresight, in dreams; facts that would be incredible, were not his honesty absolutely unquestionable, and were they not so circumstantially given, and so well known in the community among whom his narrative was circulated, as to silence all denial. Few if any men were better known, in his day, throughout New Jersey, than Benjamin Abbott. He was not only generally respected, but beloved. The natural kindliness of his temper, the unction of his religious feelings, the purity and simplicity of his life, his quiet courage, the fatherly tenderness of his manners, the richness, in fine, of his nature in all those qualities which make "the whole world kin," and to which the unsophisticated common mind so readily responds in popular assemblies, made him dear, not only to all devout but to all honest men. He was generally addressed as "Father Abbott;" many delighted to call him their "spiritual father;" and not rarely were public assemblies melted into tears by the sight of robust men, hardy but reclaimed sinners, rushing into his arms and weeping with filial gratitude upon his neck.[3]

He traveled and preached for years without one cent

[3] His memoir abounds in simple if not comical illustrations of human nature. There is probably no better disclosure to be found of the familiar and intimate life, the homely sentiments and style, of the lower but honest classes of New Jersey in the last century. Their grateful affection for good "Father Abbott" (notwithstanding his rencounters with mobs, always sooner or later subdued by him) was one of his sorest trials, for it troubled his conscience as a tribute to the creature that belonged only to the Creator. "One old woman," he says, "to whose soul the Lord had spoken peace, clapped her hands, and began to praise the creature rather than the Creator. I stepped up to her and said: 'I have done nothing for you; if there be any good, it is the Lord who has done it, and therefore praise God.' 'O!' said she, 'but you are a dear good creature for all!' I turned away and went among the people." His book is full of similar examples of popular heartiness and weakness.

of compensation, except his hospitable entertainment among the people. Frugal and industrious, he sustained his family by tilling a small farm, hiring laborers that he might alternate his manual toils with itinerant excursions; and, when he preached, within convenient proximity to his farm, he led his workmen to his meetings, paying them for their time at the rate that he payed for their labor. All his family were members of the Church, and shared his zeal; one of his sons went forth an itinerant; the remainder of the household made their home a sort of chapel; it was the resort of earnest inquirers, often from a distance; and at such visits not only the father, but the mother, and child after child, took part in the customary prayers and exhortations. Many a visitor went from the door with his face turned forever heavenward. He had a chapel erected in his neighborhood, for which he begged money and timber, from house to house. Though he was not yet fifty years old, his appearance was unusually paternal, if not patriarchal; his person was large, his countenance bland, his manners marked by religious tenderness. He dressed with Quaker-like simplicity, and his broad-brimmed hat and straight coat added not a little to the attraction of his devout temper among the numerous "Friends" of New Jersey. They frequented his appointments, entertained him at their homes, and urged him to preach in their Meeting-houses. "Thee appears so much like us we will welcome thee," said their own preachers to him. They liked him the more for his Quaker doctrine about war, then raging in the land. He was a sound patriot, but could not approve fighting, though in early life a formidable pugilist. "My call is to preach salvation to sinners," he said; "to wage war against the works of the devil. He was sometimes assailed by troops. Then

more than ever he blew the "trumpet of the Gospel," and never failed of victory. A major angrily attacked him for not "preaching up war." "I related to him," he says, "my conviction and conversion, and he was calm and wished me well." While the state was distracted with the marching and countermarching of troops, he was allowed to go on, in his own evangelical warfare, through its length and breadth. Like Christ on the highways, his preaching was *talk* to the people; he entered no house but as an evangelist, and his colloquial ministration of the truth probably did more good than his public discourses. "On my way to my next appointment,"[4] he says, "I came to a small village, stopped at a house, and asked the man if they had any preaching there. He said, 'No.' I said, 'I am a preacher, and if you will give notice I will preach to the people.' But he replied, 'They do not want preaching here,' and appeared angry. I then told my experience to the man, his wife, and two young women; and the dreadful state that man is in by nature, and then pointed out a Saviour. One of the young women began to weep. I was very happy, and asked the man if I might pray; he gave me leave, and I said, 'Let us pray.' I had no sooner began than they wept aloud." Such was his simple method, as he "went about doing good," and it could seldom fail to be effectual. In this case the weeping family offered him dinner, and food for his horse. "I left them," he says, "all in tears. I saw one of the young women some time afterward, and she told me that she was awakened at that time, and had since found the Lord precious to her soul, and had joined a Methodist class."

He went to Trenton, but found the Methodist Chapel

[4] When and where I cannot precisely ascertain; he even forgets to tell, in his Memoir, the place and date of his birth.

used as a stable by the army, and preached in the Presbyterian Church. He went forward and "preached in the evening to a crowded congregation," he writes, "and God poured out his Spirit in such a manner that one fell to the floor. A captain and some soldiers came to take me up, but the Spirit of God took him up in such a manner that he returned home crying to God for mercy. I saw him some time after, happy in God. We spent a precious time together, and parted in love. This meeting was a time of God's power; many were awakened to a sense of their danger, and the people of God were happy, and, for my part, I was very happy." He visits an uncle, whom he had not seen for seventeen years, and says: "As I sat my foot on the steps of the door the Spirit of the Lord came upon me. After asking them all how they did, I told them my experience. My uncle and aunt wept sore, and I cried out, 'The Lord is here!' A friend present said, 'He is come, for I feel his Spirit upon me,' which caused my aunt to wonder what this meant." They all accompany him to his next appointment, where there is "a melting time." He soon after meets them again, and finds his aunt thoroughly "awakened." Other relatives of his family learn the news; they meet him; and "we had a weeping time," he writes, "all the evening. They said this is the religion of Jesus!" He forms a class among them, and sends to it a leader from Trenton. Many a Society does he form in this manner. He continues: "I went to my next appointment, where they had threatened to tar and feather me. Some advised me to go some other way; but when I arrived at the place I found a large congregation assembled, to whom I preached, and God attended the Word with power — many shed tears in abundance." They were now unwilling to let him go away. "As I was

about to depart, two young men came to me; one took hold of my leg, and the other held my horse by the neck, and said, 'Will you go!' I sat on my horse for some time, exhorting them to persevere, and the Lord would bless them. Many more stood weeping; so we parted, and I went to the New Mills, (Pemberton,) where the people came out by hundreds, to whom I preached my farewell sermon. I returned home, and by Thursday night a letter was sent, informing me that sixteen were justified, and two sanctified. The reading of this letter filled my soul with love, and I was determined to preach sanctification more than ever. I received a letter from a Presbyterian in Deerfield, that his house and heart were open to receive me, adding, 'When you read these lines look upon it as a call from God.' I accordingly wrote to him to make an appointment for me on the Sunday following. I attended, and found a large congregation, to whom I preached, and some few wept. I attended again that day two weeks, and we had a melting time. I then made an appointment for the traveling preacher. This and several other places in the neighborhood were taken into the circuit. The Lord began to work in a powerful manner, and we soon had two classes; then the devil roared horribly; but God worked powerfully, and blessed the Word, and sent it with power to many hearts; many fell under it like dead men, being alarmed of their danger. We appointed a watch-night. This brought so many to see what it meant that the house could not contain the people. One of our preachers preached, and then an exhortation was given; the Lord poured out his Spirit in such a manner that the slain lay all over the house; many others were prevented from falling by the crowd, which stood so close that they supported one another. We con-

tinued till about midnight; some staid all night, and in the morning others came; several found peace, and many cried to God for mercy; it was a powerful time to many souls."

He went to a Quarterly Meeting on Morris River, "and," he writes, "we had a powerful time; the slain lay all through the house, and round it, and in the woods, crying to God for mercy, and others praising him for the deliverance of their souls. At this time there came up the river a look-out boat; the crew landed and came to the meeting; one of them stood by a woman that lay on the ground, crying to God for mercy, and said to her, 'Why do you not cry louder?' She immediately began to pray for him, and the power of the Lord struck him to the ground, and he lay and cried for mercy louder than the woman. This meeting continued from eleven o'clock till night."

These extraordinary effects sometimes spread through nearly his whole congregation, few escaping, except such as rushed out of the doors, or leaped out of the windows. If a temporary tumult ensued it was soon allayed, while the moral impression seemed to be permanent and salutary; many of the most noted reprobates of the county being reformed and converted at once into good Christians and good citizens.

He attended another quarterly meeting soon afterward, where "the Lord made bare his arm, and some fell to the floor, and others ran away." When he was about to depart an "old lady," he says, "put two dollars into my hand. This was the first money that I had ever received as a preacher; but He that was mindful of the young ravens was mindful of me. I had always traveled at my own charge before. When I received this I had but fifteen pence in my pocket, and was above two hundred miles from home."

His labors in all the region about Salem, noted at that time for its demoralization, were surprisingly successful. Some able preachers were raised up by him. Often a single sentence in his conversation left an ineffaceable impression. Taking leave of a family, he gave his hand to a military officer at the door, saying, "God, out of Christ, is a consuming fire. Farewell." "And so," he adds, "we parted; but God pursued him from the very door, and gave him no rest; before twelve o'clock that night he was out of bed on the floor at prayer. In about two months his soul was set at liberty, and he is a member of our Church at the present period." At one of his appointments near his residence one of his friends (a Quaker) and his family attended. "Before I concluded," he says, "himself, his wife, son, and daughter, were all struck under conviction, and never rested until they all found rest to their souls and joined our Society. About six months after the son died in a triumph of faith; the father was taken ill at the funeral and never went out of his house again, until carried to his grave. He departed this life praising God in a transport of joy. By this time there was a general alarm spread through the neighborhood. We had prayer-meetings, two or three times a week, and at almost every meeting some were either convinced or converted. Next morning a young man came to my house to know what he must do to be saved. I applied the promises of the Gospel, and then prayed, and after me my wife, and then my daughter Martha. While supplicating the throne of grace on his behalf, the Lord, in his infinite goodness, spoke peace to his soul, and we were all made partakers of the blessing. He joined Society, lived several years, and died clapping his hands, and shouting, 'Glory to God! I am going home!'"

Such humble labors with such positive results (however fastidiously we may criticise their incidental irregularities) could not fail of a general impression. The Society in the neighborhood of his residence increased; hitherto he had preached to them under the trees of the forest; he now projected his chapel, and Methodism was thus securely founded in that vicinity, and spread out dominantly into many neighboring towns.

For some time Abbott had been intimate with James Sterling, Esq., of whom the historian of the denomination, in New Jersey, says that probably no layman in the state "ever did more to advance religion and Methodism."[5] A merchant of rare ability and great wealth, an officer in the American Revolution, a citizen of universal esteem and influence, this zealous layman devoted himself to the new Church in the day of its deepest humility. He accompanied Abbott in many of his excursions, and often exhorted in his congregations. His house at Burlington was the home of not only Methodist itinerants, but of Christian ministers of all denominations. His friend, Rev. Ezekiel Cooper, says that "It is believed he has entertained in his house and contributed toward the support of more preachers of the Gospel than any other man in the state, if not in the United States." For half a century he thus consecrated his home and his secular business to the promotion of religion.[6]

In the latter part of 1780 Abbott writes: "I had been pressed in spirit for some time to visit Pennsylvania, and, in the love and fear of God, I set out with my life in my hand, it being a time when war was raging through the

[5] Atkinson's Memorials of Methodism in New Jersey. 1860, p. 157. Atkinson says that Sterling was converted under the ministry of Asbury; Lednum says under that of Abbott.

[6] He died in the faith, Jan., 1318, in the 76th year of his age. His name is still familiar and revered among Methodists in New Jersey.

land." He crossed the Delaware at New Castle, and opened his mission in that town to "a pack of ruffians" who had met to mob him. One of them stood before him with a bottle of rum in his hand, threatening to throw it at his head. Abbott preached on, however, dealing out to them "the terrors of the law" in a manner he had seldom done before. At his second appointment, in Wilmington, the usual "physical phenomena" of his preaching took place; one of his hearers fell to the floor. He pressed forward, preaching daily. On his way to a place near Newark, Del.,[7] not knowing his route, he stopped at a house to inquire about it; his informant promised to accompany him, remarking that a Methodist itinerant was to be there that day, and that his own preacher designed to meet and entrap the intruder. A neighbor, who was a constable, soon joined them; "so," writes Abbott, "we set off, and they soon fell into conversation about the preacher, having no idea of my being the man, as I never wore black, or any kind of garb that indicated my being a preacher, and so I rode unsuspected. The constable, being a very profane man, swore by all the gods he had, good and bad, that he would lose his right arm from his body if the Methodist preacher did not go to jail that day. This was the theme of their discourse. My mind was greatly exercised on the occasion, and what added, as it were, double weight, I was a stranger in a strange place, where I knew no one. When we arrived at the place appointed I saw about two hundred horses hitched. I also hitched mine, and retired into the woods, where I prayed and covenanted with God on my knees, that if he stood by me in this emergency I would be more for him, through

[7] As usual he gives us few names of places; Lednum identifies them, p. 235, *et seq.*

grace, than ever I had been. I then arose and went to my horse with a perfect resignation to the will of God, whether for death or for jail. I took my saddle-bags and went to the house; the man took me into a private room and desired I would preach in favor of the war, as I was in a Presbyterian settlement. I replied I should preach as God should direct me. He appeared very uneasy and left me; just before preaching he came in again and renewed his request that I would preach up for war; I replied as before, and then followed him out among the people, where he made proclamation as follows: 'Gentlemen, this house is my own, and no one shall be interrupted in my house in time of his discourse, but after he has done you may do as you please.' Thank God, said I softly, that I have liberty once more to warn sinners before I die. I then took my stand, and the house was so crowded that no one could sit down. Some hundreds were round about the door. I stood about two or three feet from the constable who had sworn so bitterly. When he saw that I was the man he had abused on the way, with so many threats and oaths, his countenance fell and he turned pale. I gave out a hymn, but no one offered to sing; I sung four lines and kneeled down and prayed. When I arose I preached with great liberty. I felt such power from God rest upon me that I was above the fear of either men or devils, not regarding whether death or jail should be my lot. Looking forward I saw a decent looking man trembling, and his tears flowing in abundance, which I soon discovered was the case with many others. After preaching, I told them I expected they wanted to know by what authority I had come into that country to preach. I then told them my conviction and conversion, the place of my nativity, and place of residence; also, my call to the ministry, and that

seven years I had labored in God's vineyard; that I spent my own money and found my own clothes, and that it was the love that I had for their souls, for whom Christ died, that had induced me to come among them at the risk of my life, and exhorted them to fly to Jesus for safety; that all things were ready; to seek, and they should find, to knock, and it should be opened unto them. By this time the people were generally melted into tears. I then concluded, and told them on that day two weeks they might expect preaching again. I mounted my horse and set out with a friendly Quaker for a pilot. We had not rode above fifty yards when I heard one hallooing after us. I looked back and saw about fifty running toward us. I then concluded that to jail I must go. We stopped, and when they came up, 'I crave your name,' said one; I told him, and so we parted. He was a justice of the peace, and was the person that I had taken notice of in time of preaching, observing him to be in great anxiety of mind. No one offered me any violence; but they committed the next preacher, on that day two weeks, to the common jail. I went home with the kind Quaker, where I tarried all night. I found that he and his wife were under serious impressions, and had had Methodist preaching at their house. They were very kind, and we spent the evening in conversing on the things of God."

He soon penetrated to Soudersburg, a German settlement, where "the Lord wrought wonders; divers fell to the floor, and several found peace. Many tarried to hear what I had seen through the land of the wonderful works of God. The people cried aloud, and continued all night in prayer." He was welcomed by Rev. Martin Boehm, in Lancaster County. Boehm, as we have seen, was one of the founders, and at last one of the bishops of the

"German Methodists," or, "United Brethren." Strawbridge had visited and labored with him; Peter Allbright, founder of the "Allbright Methodists," was one of the good German's converts. Boehm had formed a sort of circuit, consisting of four appointments; one of these, near his residence, was made a regular preaching place for the Methodist itinerants, and his own house was their hospitable home. The region became a stronghold of Methodism. Asbury visited it often; Boehm was one of his most confidential friends and counselors, and his son, Henry Boehm, joined the Methodist itinerancy, and became the bishop's traveling companion.[8]

Abbott was accompanied to Boehm's Village by quite a procession, twenty at least of the zealous Methodists of Soudersburg following him on the route. His introduction to this new scene was attended, in an extraordinary manner, by those "physical demonstrations" which had occurred under his preaching in New Jersey, and which were comparatively unknown among these quiet, rustic people. They began spontaneously as soon as he appeared among them. "When I came to my appointment," he says, "the power of the Lord came in such a manner that the people fell all about the house, and their cries might be heard afar off. This alarmed the wicked, who sprang for the doors." To tranquilize the excitement, he read a hymn and called upon a friend to raise the tune; but as soon as the latter attempted it he was

[8] Henry Boehm still survives, (1864,) one of the most venerated patriarchs of Methodism. Martin Boehm is described as a saintly and very useful preacher. "He continued to wear his beard at full length, never shaving his chin; his white locks and fresh countenance gave him a venerable aspect in old age. He lived to be almost ninety years old, and died suddenly some time in March, 1812. Soon after, Bishop Asbury preached a funeral discourse at his chapel, where he is buried, giving the interesting particulars of his life."—*Lednum*, p. 242.

struck down, and lay as a dead man. Another repeated the attempt, but fell in like manner. Abbott himself then began to sing, but, he says, "as soon as I began, the power of God came upon me in such a manner that I cried out, and was amazed. Prayer was all through the house, up-stairs and down." The veteran Boehm looked on with wonder, and exclaimed that it was a return of the apostolic Pentecost. After some time Abbott and he retired for refreshment, preparatory for a watch-night service, which was to begin at five o'clock. On their return they found prostrate multitudes weeping, praying, or apparently dead, in all parts of the house. Invariably, as they recovered their self-possession, they appeared in unimpaired health, uttering rapturous adorations. Boehm, and other German preachers, shared in the exercises of the watch-night. Under the discourse of Abbott many fell to the floor, and many fled out of the house. The services continued all night. At sunrise the next morning some were still lingering in prayer. A sensation spread through all the regions round about, and scores of the people followed the wonderful itinerant to his next appointment.

History cannot ignore these facts, to whatever doubtful construction they may be liable. Science, physiological, psychological, and theological, claims them as her data for future and important inquiries. If it be said that they arose from some peculiarity of the physical temperament of the preacher; that men of equal piety and superior ability, passing over these same regions, never produced them; that Asbury himself, gathering into the denomination its most valuable members at this period, seldom or never witnessed them as effects of his own powerful ministry; still these suggestions do not solve them, nor impeach the moral efficacy of Abbott's

preaching. Hundreds of reprobate men were reformed amid such scenes, and, after long and holy lives, died repeating, in their last utterances, the shouts of praise which at these meetings appeared clamorous disorders. If they are condemned as human infirmities, still may there not be a genuine operation of divine grace amid, and in spite of, such infirmities, and is it indeed possible that so profound a revolution as the awakening and regeneration of the human soul can take place without involving more or less its infirmities? Even if these anomalous effects be attributed to a peculiar physical power of Abbott, still does such a fact render questionable the genuineness of the moral effects of his ministry? Are not the natural, even the physical peculiarities of public speakers, legitimate sources of their power—their vocal peculiarities, the sensibility of their temperaments for pathos, sublimity, or fear? And if there be, in the human constitution, some yet unascertained power of sympathetic action on surrounding minds, may not this be sanctified and used by the divine Spirit, as are other physical or mental qualifications, especially in extraordinary periods, like that through which Methodism was now awakening the land amid demoralization and war? If it be said that such extraordinary excitements need peculiar repressive caution, Methodists generally assent, believing, however, with one of their highest authorities, already cited, that the exercise of discipline in such cases, while it "should be firm, should also be discriminating, for the sake of the real blessing," which may be attending the preaching of the truth.

Abbott passed on to his next appointment convoyed by forty persons. "God there laid to his helping hand. Many cried aloud for mercy; many wept around" him when he dismissed them: "some were truly awakened,

and others deeply convicted." He had written to his friend James Sterling, of Burlington, giving an account of the wonders of his journey, and inviting him to hasten to his help. Sterling reached him at Upper Octorara, and, though a layman, worked energetically with him; and at times his own vigorous mind was so overpowered by the prevailing excitement that he too fell, as dead, among the many who were slain by the mighty word of the preacher. At their first appointment the house was crowded, and many fell to the floor. An aged Presbyterian accosted Abbott, and declared the strange scene to be diabolical. "If it be so," he replied, "when these people revive they will prove it by their language; wait and see." "Soon after one of them came to, and he began to praise God with a loud voice; and soon another, and so on, until divers of them bore testimony for Jesus. 'Hark, hark,' said I to my old opponent, 'brother, do you hear them? this is not the language of hell, but the language of Canaan.' I then appointed prayer-meeting at a friend's house in the neighborhood. After the people had gathered I saw my old opponent among them. I gave out a hymn, and Brother Sterling prayed, and after him myself. I had spoken but a few words before Brother Sterling fell to the floor, and soon after him every soul in the house, except myself and my old Presbyterian opponent, and two others. I arose and gave an exhortation, and the two men fell, one as if he had been shot, and then there was every soul down in the house, except myself and my old opponent. He began immediately to dispute the point, telling me it was all delusion, and the work of Satan. I told him to stand still and see the salvation of the Lord. As they came to they all praised God." The next morning Sterling and others were again prostrated in a prayer-meet-

ing. They hastened to another appointment, where Abbott was again surprised to observe his "Presbyterian opponent." In a few minutes after the sermon began an alarm was given in the congregation. "I looked around," says Abbott, "and saw it was from my old opponent. He was trembling like Belshazzar. I told them to let him alone and to look to themselves, for it was the power of God that had arrested him. They let him go, and down he fell as one dead. Next morning we went to our appointment, where we had a large congregation. Looking round I saw my old Presbyterian friend again. This was nine miles distance from my former appointment. I felt great freedom in speaking. A woman began to shake in a powerful manner, and fell on the floor. I bid them to look to themselves, and went on with my discourse. Some wept, some sighed, and some groaned. When I dismissed the people, not one offered to go. I gave them an exhortation: they wept all through the house. I then said, 'If any can speak for God, say on, for I can speak no more.' Who should arise but my old Presbyterian opponent, and began with informing them that he was not one of this sect; that he had been with me four days, and that he never had seen the power of God in this way before; and added, 'It is the power of God!' and gave a warm exhortation for about three quarters of an hour."

Abbott and his companion, Sterling, continued their travels and labors without intermission, almost everywhere attended with such remarkable scenes. They passed over all the ground, then cultivated by Methodism in Pennsylvania, except Philadelphia, Bethel, (Montgomery County,) and Germantown.[9] In about thirty days he had preached twenty-nine sermons, and held

[9] Lednum, p. 292.

nearly twenty other meetings. Scores, if not hundreds, of his hearers were awakened or converted. Large districts of Delaware and Pennsylvania were aroused with astonishment and religious interest. He returned by way of Wilmington and New Castle, so exhausted that when he reached his home his friend supposed he "could never preach again;" but it was not long before he was again crossing the Delaware, on his way to Kent Circuit, Maryland, now traveled by his son, David Abbott. There the same singular power attended his word, kindling extraordinary interest from town to town. He opened his commission at Elkton. It is the first time that we hear of Methodism in that neighborhood. There was no class there at the time. He next appeared at the head of the Sassafras River, where he had a "powerful time." "Some were awakened, and inquired what they must do to be saved;" and he rejoiced to find a small class already gathered. The next day "God attended the word with power; many wept, both blacks and whites." In the Class-meeting "many fell to the floor, among whom was the man of the house." The following day, being Sunday, similar effects attended him in a barn; the people fell as if shot in battle, while "others cried for mercy." He was now on Bohemia Manor, so notable a place in early Methodism. At another appointment, the same day, more than a thousand hearers gathered around him in the woods. "The Lord preached from heaven in his Spirit's power, and the people fell on the right and on the left. Many were ready to flee." He told them "to stand still and look to themselves, for God Almighty is come into the camp." They kept their places, and he continued to invite them "to fly to Jesus for safety. It was a great day to many souls." He hastened to his afternoon appointment, leaving the slain and wounded

on the field. At the next place he found "a large congregation assembled," and preached "with great liberty; many fell to the earth, both white and black, some as dead men," while others "cried aloud to God." Thus he continued, from place to place, with scarcely varying effect, till he arrived near Kent Meeting-house, (Hinson's Chapel,) where a still more remarkable scene occurred. Many hundreds were collected at a funeral service, which was conducted by a church clergyman, who, after the usual forms and a sermon, invited Abbott to address the assembly. A tempest had been rising, covering the heavens; "two clouds appeared to approach from different quarters and met over the house. The people crowded in, up-stairs and down, to screen themselves from the storm. With some difficulty the evangelist made his way through the throng, and took his stand on one of the benches. Almost as soon as he "began, the Lord out of heaven began also." The tremendous claps of thunder exceeded anything he had ever heard, and the streams of lightning flashed through the house in "a most awful manner. The very foundations shook, the windows jarred with the violence thereof." He lost no time, but "set before them the awful coming of Christ, in all his splendor, with all the armies of heaven, to judge the world, and to take vengeance on the ungodly." The people wept, cried aloud, and fell all through the house. One "old sinner" attempted to escape, but fell to the floor as dead. The lightning, thunder, and rain "continued for about one hour in the most awful manner ever known in that country," during which time he continued to "set before the people the coming of Christ to judge the world, warning and inviting them to flee to him."

Many were "convinced and many converted" on that great day. Fourteen years later, while Abbott was pass-

ing through the same region, he met "twelve living witnesses," who informed him that they dated their salvation from it, and enumerated others who had died in the faith, and some who had moved out of the neighborhood, who began their Christian life at that memorable time. It was long an occasion of general interest in the neighborhood, and old Methodists of Kent County were accustomed to speak with wonder of what they called "Abbott's thunder-gust sermon." "Between the voice of the Lord from heaven and the voice of his servant in the house, the people had never known such a time."[10] Sterling again joined him in this neighborhood, and they pursued together their travels and labors from town to town, among whites and blacks, attended constantly with these astonishing demonstrations. After a fortnight, during which the whole territory of Kent Circuit had been aroused with interest, they returned to New Jersey. "I desire," wrote Abbott when again under his own humble roof, "to be ever truly thankful to the great Author of all good, who has brought me in safety to my habitation in peace, and has attended his unworthy dust, when absent in his service, with his Spirit's power, for which my soul adores the God and Rock of my salvation."

In October, 1782, this tireless laborer was again in Delaware, relieving his son on Dover Circuit, and scenes, equally extraordinary with those already cited, were of almost daily occurrence, as he advanced from town to town; the same questionable physical effects, the same unquestionable moral results. His simple logic respecting the former sometimes hesitated, but not long. He records an instance which affords a fuller description than has yet been given of the symptoms of this "religious

[10] Lednum, p. 321, who identifies the localities.

catalepsy."[11] "Next day I went," he writes, "to my appointment, where I was informed the children of the devil were greatly offended, and intended that day to kill me; here I had a crowded congregation. The word was attended with power. Several attempted to go out, but the crowd about the door obliged them to stay in. They began quickly to fall to the floor and to cry aloud. One young man that was struck to the floor was for three hours apparently dead; his flesh grew cold, his fingers so stiff, and spread open, that they would not yield. His blood was stagnated to his elbows. Many said, He is dead. I now began to be greatly exercised, it being the first time I ever had any fears that any one would expire under the mighty power of God. Very great and various were my exercises at this time, and I concluded I would go home, and not proceed a step further, as killing people would not answer; but at last he came to, and as soon as he could speak he praised God for what he had done for his soul!"

If he met with opposition, as he often did, from his own brethren, on account of these startling effects of his discourses, he was only the more confirmed in his own honest interpretation of them by his opponents themselves; for they usually became the most striking examples of his mysterious power. He records, in this excur-

[11] Such is the title given to these marvels by a Methodist authority who has discussed them with more scientific ability than any other writer that I have met with. (See Meth. Quart. Rev., April, 1859.) "To be thrown," he says, "into the cataleptic state in conversion is no criterion of the genuineness of that change. The proof must be sought, and will be found, elsewhere. Religious catalepsy is not a safe standard by which to estimate a religious state, growth in grace, or personal piety in any stage of experience. Because the same amount of divine influence shed upon a person, under one class of circumstances, which would result in catalepsy, would to another person in the same circumstances, and to the same person in other circumstances, be followed by no such result."

sion, an appointment in a Methodist local preacher's house; "he having heard what was going on, began to tell me he looked upon it all as confusion, for that God was a God of order. However, the people gathered, and I preached. The power of God seized a woman sitting before me; she began to tremble and fell to the floor. Many wept. I had not spoken long before the slain and wounded lay all through the house, and among the rest, the local preacher; some crying for mercy, and others praising God for what he had done for them, testifying that he had justified them, and set their souls at liberty. I desired the class to stop, and I spoke first to the local preacher. What do you think of it now, my brother—is it the work of God or not? O! said he, I never thought that God would pour out his Spirit in such a manner, for I could not move hand or foot, any more than if I had been dead; but I am as happy as I can live."

He reached Judge White's house, where he met Asbury and a score of other preachers, on their way to a quarterly meeting at Barratt's Chapel. The itinerants were astonished at the simplicity and power of Abbott. His sermon in the chapel was overwhelming; some of the hearers fell to the floor, others fled out of the house, many sobbed and prayed aloud. Asbury sent him to a neighboring gentleman's house for lodging during the night, but there, while at family prayers, three persons fell, as dead, under the singing of a hymn, one being the lady of the house, and under the prayer "several others" were prostrated; the "man of the house, who was a backslider, was restored;" they continued in prayer three hours Of course the love-feast the next morning was a joyous scene. Abbott had never been in so large and goodly a company of preachers. The crowd of people was great; as many around the house as in it. "It was a precious

time—attended with power." His expedition ended here; it had been successful, and he returned home with a thankful heart. He was now known through much of the land as one of the most extraordinary preachers of Methodism—a Boanerges—before whom gainsayers, persecutors, mobs, either yielded or were prostrated. He was soon to leave house and lands, and, entering the "regular itinerancy," extend his labors and triumphs to other parts of the country, where we shall meet him again.

Meanwhile one of the most distinguished itinerants of the times had entered the field in the South.[12] We have already seen the youthful Jesse Lee introduced into the Church, on Robert Williams's Circuit, in Virginia, a convert in the great revival which was so long maintained by Williams, Jarratt, and their fellow-laborers. As this great awakening advanced in 1775, he says, "I felt a sweet distress in my soul for holiness of heart and life. I sensibly felt, while I was seeking purity of heart, that I grew in grace and in the knowledge of God. This concern of soul lasted some time, till at length I could say, I have nothing but the love of Christ in my heart. My soul was continually happy in God. The world with all its charms was *crucified to me, and I crucified to the world.*"

Thus endued with power from on high, while yet in his eighteenth year, he was maturing for the great work before him. Several occasions for the exercise of his gifts in public exhortation occurred about this time, but his natural diffidence made him shrink from them, and might have long interfered with his entrance into the ministry, had not domestic circumstances providentially

[12] Thift's Life of Lee; and Rev. Dr. L. M. Lee's Life and Times of Lee.

led, in 1777, to his removal to North Carolina, where, away from the embarrassing associations of his native neighborhood, he felt more courage for such untried efforts. Here he was appointed a class-leader, and was soon exhorting in public. In 1779 he preached his first sermon in North Carolina. Endowed with quick sensibility and ready utterance, he immediately became a popular speaker; yet he writes, "I was so sensible of my own weakness and insufficiency that, after I had preached, I would retire to the woods and prostrate myself on the ground, and weep before the Lord, praying that he would pardon the imperfections of my preaching, and give me strength to declare his whole counsel in purity."

In 1780 his destined career, as a preacher of Methodism, seemed about to be defeated by an unexpected trial. He was drafted into the Revolutionary army, and was compelled to go into camp. His conscience revolted from war. "I weighed the matter over and over again," he says, "but my mind was settled; as a Christian and as a preacher of the Gospel, I could not fight. I could not reconcile it to myself to bear arms, or to kill one of my fellow-creatures. However I determined to go, and to trust in the Lord, and accordingly prepared for my journey." He was nearly two weeks on his way to the camp. On the evening that he came in sight of it he "lifted up his heart to God, and," he adds, "besought him to take my cause into his own hands and support me in the hour of trial." He was ordered on parade. The sergeant offered him a gun, but he would not take it; the lieutenant brought him another, but he refused it. The lieutenant reported the case to the colonel, and returned again with a gun and set it down against him; he still declined to take it; he was then delivered to the guard. The colonel came and remonstrated with him, but un

able to answer his objections, left him again to the custody of the guard. Far away from his brethren, solitary amid the clamors and vices of the camp, considered as a fanatic or a maniac, he knew not what would be the issue of his singular condition, but he was determined to obey his conscience, to test Providence, to "stand still" in the strength of his religious faith, "and see the salvation of God."

He not only refused to violate his conscience by bearing arms, he remembered that he was panoplied for a higher warfare, and immediately set himself about it. "After dark I told the guard," he says, "we must pray before we sleep, and, there being a Baptist under guard, I asked him to pray, which he did. I then told the people that if they would come out early in the morning I would pray with them. I felt remarkably happy in God under all my trouble, and did not doubt but that I should be delivered in due time. Some of the soldiers brought me straw to lay upon, and offered me their blankets and great coats for covering. I slept pretty well that night, which was the first and the last night I was ever under guard. As soon as it was light, I was up and began to sing; some hundreds soon assembled and joined with me, and we made the plantation ring with the songs of Zion. We then knelt down and prayed; while I was praying my soul was happy in God; I wept much and prayed loud, and many of the poor soldiers also wept. I do not think that I ever felt more willing to suffer, for the sake of religion, than I did at that time."

He went further. A neighboring inn-keeper, while yet in bed, heard his early prayer, was affected to tears, and came entreating him to preach. In a short time the man of God was standing on a bench near the tent of his commanding officer, proclaiming as his text, *Except ye repent*,

ye shall all likewise perish." "I was enabled," he says, "to speak plainly and without fear; and I wept while endeavoring to declare my message. Many of the people, officers as well as men, were bathed in tears before I was done. That meeting afforded me an ample reward for all my trouble. At its close, some of the gentlemen went about with their hats, to make a collection of money for me, at which I was very uneasy, and ran in among the people begging them to desist." When his colonel heard of his preaching, "It affected him very much," says Lee, "so he came and took me out to talk with me on the subject of bearing arms. I told him I could not kill a man with a good conscience, but I was a friend to my country, and was willing to do any thing I could while I continued in the army, except that of fighting. He then asked me if I would be willing to drive their baggage-wagon. I told him I would, though I had never driven a wagon before. He said their main cook was a Methodist, and could drive the wagon when we were on a march, and I might lodge and eat with him, to which I agreed. He then released me from guard."

For nearly four months was he detained in the army, suffering severe privations and trials, fatiguing marches, want of food, the clamorous profanity of the camp, and sickness that, in one instance, endangered his life, but during which he was "comforted to find that he had no doubt of his salvation," "for," he adds, "I believed that should the Lord see fit to remove me from this world, I should be called to join the armies of heaven."

During these sufferings he continued to preach whenever circumstances admitted, and not without effect on his hardy hearers. "Many of them," he says on one occasion, "were very solemn, and some of them wept

freely under the preaching of the word. I was happy in God, and thankful to him for the privilege of warning the wicked once more. It was a great cross for me to go forward in matters of so much importance, where there were few to encourage and many to oppose; but I knew that I had to give an account to God for my conduct in the world; I felt the responsibility laid upon me, and was resolved to open my mouth for him. I often thought I had more cause to praise and adore him for his goodness than any other person. For some weeks I hardly ever prayed in public, or preached, or reproved a sinner, without seeing some good effects produced by my labors." Disease prevailed among the troops, and many died. He not only preached to them on Sundays, but practically became their chaplain, going among them where they lay in barns, talking to them about their souls, begging them to prepare to meet their God, attending the funerals of those who died, and praying at their graves.

For more than a year after his discharge from the army he was zealously occupied in preaching in his native neighborhood. He was, meanwhile, frequently impressed with the conviction that it was his duty to enter the traveling ministry, but hesitated, under a consciousness of the responsibility of the sacred office. In this state of suspense he attended the session of an Annual Conference, held at Ellis's Chapel, in Sussex County, Va., April, 1782. Thirty preachers were present, a heroic band of itinerant evangelists. The spectacle of these devoted and self-sacrificing men, their ardent zeal for God, their sympathy and forbearance for each other, touched his heart, as the like scene often has the hearts of thousands of others. He thus speaks of it: "The union and brotherly love which I saw among the preach-

ers exceeded everything I had ever seen before, and caused me to wish that I was worthy to have a place among them. When they took leave of each other, I observed that they embraced each other in their arms, and wept as though they never expected to meet again. Had heathens been there they might have well said, 'See how these Christians love one another!' By reason of what I saw and heard during the four days that the Conference sat, I found my heart truly humbled in the dust, and my desires greatly increased to love and serve God more perfectly than I had ever done before. At the close of the Conference, Mr. Asbury came to me and asked me if I was willing to take a circuit. I told him that I could not well do it, but signified that I was at a loss to know what was best for me to do. I was afraid of hurting the cause which I wished to promote, for I was very sensible of my own weakness. At last he called to some of the preachers standing in the yard, a little way off, and said, 'I am going to enlist Brother Lee.' One of them replied, 'What bounty do you give?' He answered, 'Grace here, and glory hereafter, will be given if he is faithful.' Some of the preachers then talked to me, and persuaded me to go; but I trembled at the thought, and shuddered at the cross, and did not at that time consent."

Though thus hesitating, he went home and prepared his temporal affairs, that he might be able to obey the divine call, and enter more fully upon what he now began to feel was the destiny of his life. Before the end of the year he was on his way, with a colleague, Edward Dromgoole, to North Carolina, to form a new and extensive circuit.[13] The next year he was appointed to labor reg-

[13] Well known afterward as Camden Circuit. Lee's biographer says, "The district of country embraced by it remains to the present time

ularly in that state; and being now fully in the sphere of his duty, he was largely blessed with the comforts of the divine favor, and went through the extensive rounds of his circuit "like a flame of fire." His word was accompanied with the authority and power of the Holy Ghost. Stout-hearted men were smitten down under it, large congregations were often melted into tears by irrepressible emotions, and his eloquent voice was not unfrequently lost amid the sobs and ejaculations of his audience. Often his own deep sympathies, while in the pulpit, could find relief only in tears. A better illustration of his character as a preacher cannot, perhaps, be cited than the profound and thrilling effect of his preaching on both himself and his hearers. He records numerous instances: "I preached at Mr. Spain's with great liberty to a good congregation; the Spirit of the Lord came upon us, and we were bathed in tears. I wept, and so loud were the people's cries that I could scarcely be heard, though I spoke very loud. I met the class; most of the members expressed a great desire for holiness of heart and life, and said they were determined to seek for perfect love." "I preached at Howel's Chapel, where the Lord was pleased once more to visit my soul. I spoke with many tears, and was very happy. The hearers wept greatly. It was a time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord. When I met the class the people could hardly speak for weeping. It was a precious day to my soul." "I preached at Howel's Chapel, from Ezek. xxxiii, 11: 'Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord,' etc. It was to me a time of uncommon comfort. When I came to the last part of the text, and to show what Christ had done for the people that they might not die, many of the

(1848) full of the good fruits of that first planting. Methodism has struck its roots deep in the affections of thousands."

hearers wept, and some of them cried aloud. I saw so clearly that the Lord was willing to bless the people, even while I was speaking, that I began to feel distressed for them; at last I burst into tears, and could not speak for some moments. After stopping and weeping for some time, I began again, but had spoken but a little while before the cries of the people overcame me, and I wept with them so that I could not speak. I found that love had tears, as well as grief."

Such a spirit could not fail to captivate the multitude. It was characteristic of Lee through his long and successful career. Pathos was natural to him. Humor seems, in some temperaments, to be the natural counterpart, or, at least, reaction of pathos. Lee became noted for his wit; we shall see it, serving him with many a felicitous advantage, in his rencounters with opponents, especially in the North eastern States. It flowed in a genial and perennial stream from his large heart, and played most vividly in his severest itinerant hardships; but he was full of tender humanity and affectionate piety. His rich sensibilities, rather than any remarkable intellectual powers, made him one of the most eloquent and popular preachers of his day. One of his fellow-laborers, a man of excellent judgment, says that he possessed uncommon colloquial powers, and a fascinating address; that his readiness at repartee was scarcely equaled, and by the skillful use of this talent he often taught those who were disposed to be witty at his expense that the safest way to deal with him was to be civil; that he was fired with missionary zeal, and, moreover, a man of great moral courage. "He preached with more ease than any other man I ever knew in the connection."[14] It is no matter of surprise that in preaching his farewell sermon, in these

[14] Rev. Thomas Ware, Life and Travels, p. 207.

new southern fields, the people wept so much that he could not proceed. "I sat down," he says, "and wept several minutes. I then left the house, but before I could get far, they came around me weeping. I began to bid them farewell, and to speak a few words to them; but my grief was so great that I was soon forced to stop."

During the year 1784 he labored on Salisbury Circuit, in the west of North Carolina, and here the same traits characterized, and the same results followed, his ardent ministry. In four days after his arrival on the circuit we find him writing in the following strain: "I preached at Hern's to a large company of solemn hearers. While I was speaking of the love of God, I felt so much of that love in my own soul that I burst into a flood of tears, and could speak no more for some time, but stood and wept. I then began again, but was so much overcome that I had to stop and weep several times before I finished my subject. There were very few dry eyes in the house. O, my God, what am I that thou art mindful of me? It was a cross to me to come to this circuit, but now I feel assured that the Lord will be with and support me."

While on this circuit his labors were indefatigable, his journeys incessant, his health at times prostrated, and his life endangered by exposure to the weather and the fording of rivers. Still we hear from him but one language, expressive of unabated fervor, triumphant faith, and yearning, weeping sympathy for souls. During these labors he was repeatedly transferred, for half a year or more, to other circuits. From Norfolk in Virginia to the south-west of North Carolina he hastened to and fro, sounding the alarm, reorganizing Societies which had been nearly destroyed by the disturbances of the

war, pioneering Methodism into regions which it had not before penetrated, and raising up some energetic men for the itinerancy. By the latter part of 1784 he had become recognized as an important if not representative man of his denomination. In December of that year he was summoned to meet his ministerial brethen with Dr. Coke in Baltimore, for the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church. He was five hundred miles distant, and chose to remain on his frontier circuit, where he was journeying and preaching almost daily. He thus failed to share in the momentous proceedings of which he was to be the earliest historian, and one of the ablest defenders.

We have followed, through the stormy period of the Revolution, the principal evangelists of Methodism by such imperfect traces as the scanty records of the times afford. Meanwhile scores of other laborers entered the field, many of them men of might, who have left historic impressions on the denomination and on the country; whose labors have been gigantic in results, but unrecorded in detail. As we further review this eventful period, to collect the fragmentary notices of the proceedings of their Annual Conferences, some of them will appear briefly on the scene; but many, among the most saintly and heroic, whose record will be forever on high, can never be duly commemorated on earth. The energy and progress of Methodism during these tumultuous times are surprising. Revivals prevailed in some places throughout the whole period of the Revolution, and the ministry was rapidly reinforced. But many of the Societies, says the cotemporary historian, were dispersed or could not assemble, many of their male members were drafted, and when the militia were called out, had to go into the army to fight for their country. Some lost their

lives, and some made shipwreck of their faith; some were bound in their consciences not to fight, and no threatenings could compel them to bear arms or hire substitutes. Some of them "were whipped, some fined, some imprisoned, others were sent home, and many were persecuted. The Societies had much to discourage them and little to help them forward. But notwithstanding their difficulties they stood fast as one body, and waxed stronger and stronger in the Lord."[15] He assures us, however, that no sooner had the war ended than the evangelists saw the fruits of their former labors in most of the land, and that the sufferings and dispersion of so many of the Societies proved to be a signal advantage. Many Methodists had, through necessity, fear, or choice, moved into the back settlements, or new parts of the country, some even beyond the great mountain ranges. "As soon as peace was declared, and the way opened, they invited us to come among them; and by their earnest and frequent petitions, both oral and written, we went. They were ready to receive us with open hands and willing hearts, and to cry out, 'Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'" In fine, the providential design and adaptation of Methodism, for the new nation, are revealed all through this period of its preparatory operations.

The erection of chapels was retarded, if not arrested, through most of these years. Asbury's project of a building in Norfolk was defeated, and the city laid in ashes; the other scattered chapels in Virginia were hardly more than wooden shells: the two in Baltimore had the rudest accommodations. The rural meeting-houses of Maryland could hardly shelter their congregations from the weather. St. George's, in Phil-

[15] Lee, pp. 77, 84.

adelphia, was used as a riding-school by the British cavalry; but the military authorities, probably through respect for Wesley and the English itinerants in America, gave the Society the use of the First Baptist Church, on Lagrange Place, Front-street. The chapel in Trenton, N. J., was occupied by troops. That of Salem was not projected till about the close of the war; it was the fourth in the state after Bethel, Pemberton, and Trenton, and was hardly better than a barn. It was often besieged by mobs, till at last the magistrates interfered and protected the feeble Society. A profane club of the town continued the persecution, in burlesque imitations of the Methodist worship, but was suddenly arrested by an appalling occurrence in one of their assemblies. While they were amusing themselves with jocular recitations of hymns and exhortations, a female guest rose on a bench to imitate a Methodist class. "Glory to God!" she exclaimed; "I have found peace, I am sanctified; I am now ready to die!" At the last word she fell to the floor a corpse. The club, struck with consternation, never assembled again, and Methodism became eminently influential in the town and all its vicinity.[16] It has been erroneously supposed that John-street Chapel, in New York, was occupied by the British troops during a part of the Revolutionary War.[17] Seven Annual Conferences were, indeed, held without an appointment to that city. The defeat of the Americans on Long Island, August 27, 1776, by which they lost more than two thousand men, including important officers, compelled them to evacuate the city. From that event down to the peace of 1783 the Conference had no

[16] Lednum, p. 370.

[17] Bangs, i, p. 119, and Gorrie's History of Episcopal Methodism, p. 70. Wakeley corrects the error, p. 267.

official access to this its original church. The chapels of most denominations in the city were appropriated by the enemy. All the Presbyterian churches were occupied by his troops: the Middle Dutch, the North Dutch, and the French were crowded as prisons; the Baptist used as a stable; the Quaker as a hospital;[18] John-street, however, was spared, through deference to Wesley and his English representatives in the colonies. The Methodists were allowed to use it themselves on Sunday nights; the Hessian troops, with their chaplain, occupied it in religious services on Sunday mornings. The little flock, though much reduced by the dispersion of many of its members, met regularly, and was providentially provided with pastors. We have already seen that John Mann was converted and received into the Society under the ministry of Boardman. He had graduated, as Class-leader and Exhorter, to the rank of an effective Local Preacher, by the time that the Revolution rendered his services most indispensable to his suffering brethren. They now placed him in charge of their deserted pulpit; he preached in it all through the war, and during the same time acted as Class-Leader, Trustee, and Treasurer. His services were of the highest importance in this critical period. They probably saved the Methodism of New York city from at least temporary extinction.

Mann received timely assistance in his solitary ministrations. We have heretofore witnessed the last sad interview of Shadford with Asbury at Judge White's mansion, where they spent a day in fasting and prayer before deciding whether they should remain in the colonies through the perils of the war, or return to England, and the opposite conclusions which they reached, and their final leave-taking. Before their separation both of them

[18] Wakeley, p. 270.

had to keep themselves concealed, a part of the time, in an out-house, hidden in a neighboring skirt of wood, whither the good judge's wife furtively carried their meals. When they parted, Asbury wrote in his Journal: "S. S. came in from the Upper Circuit, but on Tuesday [March 10, 1778] both he and G. S. left me. However I was easy; the Lord was with me; let him do with me as seemeth good in his sight." S. S. and G. S. were doubtless Samuel Spraggs[19] and George Shadford. We have but indistinct traces of the former. He was received on trial at the Philadelphia Conference of 1774, and appointed to the Brunswick Circuit, Virginia, where he labored in the extraordinary revival which was spreading through all that region under the labors of Jarratt and Williams. The next year, by a sudden and long transition, he appeared in Philadelphia, where he continued two years; an evidence of his superior abilities. In 1777 he took charge of Frederick Circuit, Maryland, and it was thence that he went to Judge White's house to meet Asbury and Shadford. He was probably an Englishman and a royalist, and, with Shadford, left Asbury to take refuge within the British lines. On arriving at New York, Shadford took passage for England, but Spraggs was induced to join Mann in supplying the John-street pulpit. His name now, naturally enough, disappears from the Minutes, as had that of John-street Church.[20] It appears no more in that record till the end of the war, 1783, when it is again inserted with that of the New York appointment, and also among the list of "assistants." In

[19] His name is spelled "Spragg" in the Minutes; but in the Old Record of John-street Church, where it often recurs for years, it is invariably given as "Spraggs."—*Wakeley*, 281.

[20] Wakeley says "strangely disappears," etc. Usually only the names of appointed preachers were yet inserted. John-street was no longer an appointment, being within the British lines.

1784 it disappears forever; now not without mystery. By this date the Minutes record deaths and locations, but the name of Samuel Spraggs is unmentioned.[21] At John-street he had received the largest salary given to any Methodist preacher of those times; about three hundred dollars per annum. It is probable that the prospect of harder work, with poorer support, elsewhere, when, according to usage, he must be removed, discouraged him; it is possible that his domestic necessities by this time rendered better support indispensable. He left the denomination and became pastor of the "Old Protestant Episcopal Church" in Elizabethtown, and his name is commemorated on a tablet on its walls.[22]

During the war, after the battle of Long Island, no other itinerant crossed the Hudson. The little church in New York was totally isolated from the rest of the Methodist communion. Before the war it reported more than two hundred members; at its close but sixty. As most of the churches in the city were shut, during its occupation by the British, the congregations of John-street were unusually large, notwithstanding the declension of the membership of the Society. Its weekly collections were also extraordinary. If some of its communicants were royalists, at the arrival of the foreign troops, yet, by frequent removals to Nova Scotia and elsewhere, they left a decided majority who were loyal to the colonial cause. These, however, were wary; under military domination, they availed themselves quietly of any indulgence which the foreigners, out of respect to Wesley's opinions, were disposed to grant them. The higher officers showed them much regard; but subor-

[21] Bangs, in his Alphabetical List, vol. iv, App., marks him as withdrawn.

[22] Wakeley, p. 290.

dinates and the common troops often treated them with disrespect, probably knowing better their real sentiments on the war. They would stand in the aisles during worship with their caps on, and sometimes ventured on more significant offenses. On one occasion, at the concluding hymn, they sung the national song, "God save the king," as a test of the opinions of the people. The latter were familiar with a lyric of Charles Wesley adapted to this tune. Their indignation, or patriotism, for once overcame their wonted caution, and they followed the royal song with their own triumphant hymn:

"Come, thou almighty King,
Help us thy Name to sing,
Help us to praise:
Father all-glorious,
O'er all victorious,
Come, and reign over us,
Ancient of Days.

"Jesus, our Lord, arise!
Scatter our enemies,
And make them fall!
Let thine almighty aid
Our sure defense be made;
Our souls on thee be stay'd;
Lord, hear our call!" etc.[23]

Occasionally some of the more important men of the army, from mischief, perhaps, rather than malice, interrupted their humble worship. "Upon a Christmas eve, when the members had assembled to celebrate the advent of the world's Redeemer, a party of British officers, masked, marched into the chapel. One, very properly personifying their master, was dressed with cloven feet and a long forked tail. The devotions of course soon ceased, and the chief devil, proceeding up the aisle, entered the altar. As he was ascending the stairs of the pulpit, a gentleman

[23] G. P. Disosway, Esq., in Wakeley, p. 458.

present, with his cane, knocked off his Satanic majesty's mask, when lo, there stood a well-known British colonel! He was immediately seized and detained, until the city guard was sent to take charge of the bold offender. The congregation retired, and the entrances of the church were locked upon the prisoner for additional security. His companions outside then commenced an attack upon the doors and windows, but the arrival of the guard put an end to these disgraceful proceedings, and the prisoner was delivered into their custody."

During most of the war Methodism had its chief successes in its southern fields. Abbott and his fellow-laborers kept it alive and moving in New Jersey, and at the peace that state reported more than one thousand members; but, out of the nearly fourteen thousand returned in 1783, more than twelve thousand were in Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, and North Carolina. There were more within the small limits of Delaware than in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, or New York. New York had but about sixty, Philadelphia but a hundred and nineteen, Baltimore more than nine hundred. Nearly all the preachers who entered the itinerant ranks during these years were raised up south of Pennsylvania. It was, in fine, during these stormy times that Methodism took that thorough possession of the central colonies which it has ever since maintained, and began to send forth those itinerant expeditions which have borne its ensign over the South, over the West, and even to the Northeast as far as Maine; for we shall hereafter see that not only Lee, but many of his assistant founders of Methodism in New England, were from these middle provinces. While the war lasted they pushed their way southward and westward, but as soon as the struggle closed they broke energetically into the North. Meth-

odism thus took much of its primitive tone from the characteristic temperament of the colonies of Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia—a fact which had no slight influence on its history for more than half a century. The subtler intelligence and severer temper of the North, and especially of the Northeast, were to intervene at the opportune moment, to develop its literary, theological, and educational interests, and to embody it in effective and enduring institutions and forms of policy; but it needed yet the animation, the energetic temperament, the social aptness and vivacity, the devotional enthusiasm, of the more Southern communities. At the end of the Revolutionary War there was probably not a Methodist in the Eastern States; for the Society formed by Boardman, in Boston, had become extinct. It was to achieve its chief triumphs, for some time yet, southward and westward, and to encounter in those directions adventures and hardships for which the ardent and generous spirit of its present people and ministry peculiarly fitted it. It went forward, not only preaching and praying, but also "shouting," infecting the enterprising, adventurous, and scattered populations of the wilderness and frontiers with its evangelic enthusiasm, and gathering them by thousands into its communion. It pressed northward, at first, with the same zealous ardor, but became there gradually attempered with a more deliberate, a more practical, yet a hardly less energetic spirit. The characteristics of both sections blended, securing to it at once unity, enthusiasm, and practical wisdom, especially in its great fields in the West, where, for the last half century, and probably for all future time, it was destined to have its most important sway.

END OF VOL. I.

CAPTAIN THOMAS WEBB

Who Introduced Methodism

in Pennsylvania, Delaware and New Jersey.